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Nick Carter Stories

STRAIGHT TO THE GOAL ~

-OR-

Nick Carter's ~ Queer Challenge

NICK CARTER STORIES

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STRAIGHT TO THE GOAL;

Or, NICK CARTER'S QUEER CHALLENGE.

Edited by CHICKERING CARTER.

CHAPTER I.

THE MESSAGE OF THE SPEAR.

A spear shot into the midst of the camp, and stuck, quivering, in the ground!

Patsy Garvan and Chick jumped to their feet, rifle in hand, and looked inquiringly at Nick Carter.

The detective had not moved. He was sitting with his back against a rock, a cigar in his mouth, and silently contemplating the small fire that he had consented to have made.

When the spear came sailing over the bluff, at the foot of which was the little camp, he merely glanced at it, as if it were a rather curious visitor, but not one to cause untoward agitation.

There were other persons around the camp fire besides Nick Carter and his two assistants.

Jefferson Arnold, the millionaire shipowner of New York and Calcutta; Jai Singh, the high-caste Hindu, who had proved himself so valuable an ally to Nick Carter, and Adil, also an East Indian, the body servant of Jefferson Arnold's son, Leslie, all were sitting there.

The men started up when the spear came sailing over the rocks and buried its heavy metal head in the ground just before them.

"That thing might have hit some of us," cried Jefferson Arnold. "Better look out! There may be others."

"I hardly think so," was Nick Carter's calm response. "That is a message only, unless I am much mistaken. Don't you see there is something tied around the wooden shaft just below the head. Looks like a bit of cloth."

He stepped forward, and, with a sharp tug, drew the spear from the hard earth. Then he unwound from it a silk necktie of a rather unusual pattern.

"It is Leslie's!" shouted Jefferson Arnold wildly, as he held out his hand for the tie. "I never saw one like it except on my son. He had it on when we were in that city yonder."

"I remember it," answered Nick, looking at the curious combination of colors thoughtfully. "It struck me as unique, and yet in perfect taste. Still, probably there are others like it in the world."

"Perhaps. But it isn't likely others would have these initials embroidered on the back of it," rejoined Jefferson. "See! 'L. A.' No, Carter, this is my boy's necktie, and he is in the hands of those rapscallions over there."

The father buried his face in his hands, and rocked to and fro convulsively.

"Well, even so, what is the meaning of the spear coming over the rocks like this?" asked Patsy.

"There can be only one meaning," returned Nick Carter. "Calaman, the high priest of that strange city, Shangore, sends us this necktie to let us know he has Leslie Arnold a prisoner."

"Why did we ever come away without making sure he was safe?" groaned Jefferson Arnold. "It was my fault. My boy will think we have deserted him."

"No," contradicted Nick. "He will know better than that. He will understand just how it was. In the darkness, when we escaped from that city, we thought he was with us. You will remember we had quite a tussle on the drawbridge, and got off only just in time. It looks now as if Leslie must have been caught when they pulled up the bridge."

"I suppose so," assented the millionaire. "But what are we going to do?" he wailed. What do you suppose this message means? Do you think the necktie was sent just to taunt us?"

The agony of this usually self-contained man was pitiful.

An answer came in an unexpected way at this moment. Another spear dropped upon the rocks a little way off and lay flat. It had not been so skillfully discharged

as the first one, but it also bore its message—this time in writing.

The characters were more like those of ancient Greece than the letters used by English-speaking people to-day, and the spelling was phonetic. But it was possible to make them out, with a little study.

"This says 'You are all invited to Shangore,'" announced Nick Carter, after examining the note for a few minutes. Here is a small sketch of the head and face of Calaman in the corner. In lieu of a signature, I suppose. It is written on some kind of parchment. Probably the people of Shangore have not mastered the art of making paper."

"Many letters are written on skin of this kind," remarked Jai Singh quietly, as he took the scrap of material from Nick Carter's hand and rubbed it between his fingers. "And yet paper is made in many parts of India, too."

"That is all unimportant," interrupted Jefferson Arnold impatiently. "What are we going to do about it? How are we going to save my boy?"

"What do you want to do?" asked Nick.

"Go," was the prompt reply.

"That's what I say," put in Patsy. "If Leslie is in that heathen city, we've got to get him out."

"It may mean death, remember, Patsy!" suggested Nick Carter.

His impulsive young assistant actually jumped in the air and cracked his heels together, as one of his ancestors might have done at Donnybrook Fair, generations before, when a challenge was thrown out to them.

"What do we care for that?" howled Patsy. "We'll make it hot for them first. Anyhow, I don't think it would mean death or anything like that. But we've got to get Leslie Arnold."

Jefferson Arnold reached across to shake hands with Patsy.

"Well, let us look over the situation dispassionately before we take action," suggested Nick. "We cannot hide from ourselves that Calaman is a cunning and powerful personage, and that his control of the people of that city, where they worship the Golden Scarab, is complete."

"I just want to get my fingers on that old geezer's throat if he has hurt Leslie," muttered Patsy.

"When we went into Shangore yesterday with Calaman and his guards, it was as his guest," continued Nick. "We found the rascal Pike, who had stolen a hundred thousand dollars from the Arnold Company in Calcutta, and who had taken refuge in Shangore, because he did not think any one could trace him there."

"That was reasonable enough for him to think," commented Chick. "Shangore, the capital city of Bolongu, is right over here, in the Himalayas, in a region where few white men have penetrated in many centuries."

"I don't believe any have been here till now," put in Jai Singh, as he looked up from polishing his spearhead with a cloth he had taken from his garments. "At least, not for more than two or three hundred years."

"That's as it may be," observed Nick Carter. "Anyhow, we all know that it was the intention of Calaman to hold us as prisoners, and perhaps to kill us all eventually. That was why we got out."

"The only thing there was for us to do," growled Jefferson Arnold.

"Now he is trying to entice us in again," said Chick. "How do we know Leslie Arnold is in the city?"

"Here is his necktie, sent over to us on a spear," Nick reminded him.

"Well, what of that? Leslie may have dropped it."

"No," interposed Jefferson Arnold. "I saw that necktie tightly knotted around his neck as we came over the drawbridge. It could not have come off accidentally. The only way old Calaman could have got hold of it was by having it taken from the boy's neck. Leslie is a prisoner in Shangore."

"That is my reading of it," agreed Nick Carter. "We shall have to go and get him out."

"I don't see how we're going to do that, even if we get into the city," remarked Jai Singh. "Those thick walls and the gates that no one can pass must be kept in mind."

Arnold looked at the tall, dignified Hindu resentfully.

"What are you croaking about, Jai Singh? It isn't like you to hold back when there is to be some fighting. Why do you oppose our going back to Shangore?"

"I do not oppose it, sahib," replied Jai Singh, with dignity. "I need not tell that I am ready to fight. My spear is sharp and my arm strong. Besides, I have learned to use the revolver I carry in my sash. But I know of the danger that is behind the walls of Shangore, and it is not well that you should forget it, either."

"We do not forget it," put in Nick Carter. "But we have to bring Leslie Arnold away, and we must take whatever risks there are. Jai Singh, will you make them understand that we will go back?"

Jai Singh bowed in acquiescence, and, picking up his spear, was about to go down the pass through the rocks that led to the valley, on the opposite side of which the towers and roofs of Shangore glistened in the early-morning sun.

"Wait," ordered Nick. "Where are you going?"

"To the cliff beyond, where the men in the valley can see me."

"I understand. You will give them a sign that they will understand. Well, tell them we will come at once."

Jai Singh bowed again, and disappeared, while Nick Carter turned to give a few last words of advice to those with him.

"We have been here all night," he began, "and we are rested. We have had a good breakfast, and are strong enough to fight."

"You bet!" threw in Patsy Garvan energetically.

"It isn't likely we shall be called on to do anything of the kind at first," went on Nick. "But we shall have to use our brains if we are to come through this enterprise in safety, and also bring Leslie Arnold with us."

"We put a lot of their soldiers out of business in that scrap we had with them last night," observed Chick. "It would be bad if Calaman decided to revenge himself upon us for their loss."

"No fear of that," put in Adil, the young Hindu, speaking for the first time. "Calaman thinks nothing of the lives of his men. As he has said to us, they are his slaves, and he can do what he likes with them. He may be sorry to lose their services, but he never would think of avenging them. They are not important enough, in his eyes."

"There's truth in that, Adil," assented Nick Carter. "We have seen how he caused the death of one of his guards

just because he stumbled and dropped a package he was carrying. No, I dare say he will pretend to be friendly with us, as if there never had been a fight."

"He's a sly old rascal," snorted Jefferson Arnold. "But we'll beat him yet. We've got to do it. We shall be taking a big chance going into that walled city of his, but I've got to save my boy, at any risk."

"We will start," announced Nick Carter. "Jai Singh has delivered our answer by this time."

There was no particular preparation required before they went on. The rifles they had laid by their sides were picked up, and the few fragments of biscuits that had not been devoured were placed in their pockets with the whole ones that Nick Carter's forethought had caused them all to carry with them.

"We have no ammunition," observed Nick. "But we must get hold of some of those cartridges of ours that they took from us as soon as we are well within Shangore. I will get the old fellow to let me show him how we use these 'death sticks,' as he calls them."

They marched through the crooked pass between the towering walls of rocks, and came suddenly upon Jai Singh, who was waving his spear about so that a number of men who stood in the valley, looking up, could see his movements without difficulty.

"I have told them," said Jai Singh coolly. "We can go down at once."

"Very well, Jai Singh," returned the detective. "Come on, everybody. And remember, Patsy," he added to his second assistant, "I will do the talking."

CHAPTER II.

SHARPSHOOTING.

When they walked across the drawbridge at the nearest of the four great gates of the city, and passed under the portcullis, escorted by a dozen of the guards of the high priest Calaman, the latter came forward with a smile and bade them welcome.

"Isn't he the limit?" muttered Patsy. "Any one would think we were friends of his."

Nick Carter gave Patsy a warning look, and addressed Calaman in calm, firm tones:

"Whether we are welcome or not, Calaman, is not of so much importance as to know whether you are prepared to deliver to us the white man you have in Shangore."

"My son!" broke in Jefferson Arnold. "That's whom we want."

Calaman held up his hands with a deprecating gesture, as he smiled.

"My white brothers might know that I would not ask them to come back unless I had something to offer that would please them," he exclaimed. "We did not understand each other before, and that was why there was fighting and death, when all I desired was peace and good feeling."

"Old liar!" murmured Chick.

"Your former apartments in the palace are ready for you," continued the priest. "Will you honor me by taking possession? I will send you food and wine. You need them after your journey. After that, we will go to the public square."

"Why?" asked the detective.

"This is the day of the Festival of the Golden Scarab," was the reply. "We ask you to take part in the celebration by showing us again how the death sticks do their work. Will you not do it?"

"Where is the white man we want—he who is the son of my friend, here?"

Nick Carter was resolved not to be turned aside from the main purpose of their coming, persistently as the wily priest endeavored to lead the conversation into other channels.

"He shall be delivered to you in good time," answered Calaman. "In the meanwhile, you have my assurance that he is well and enjoying treatment such as you would desire."

They had to be content with this for the time being.

"We shall be ready in half an hour," Nick Carter announced abruptly, as he walked away to the apartments they had occupied before.

Calaman was as good as his word in reference to the meal he had mentioned, and though they had had a frugal breakfast already up in the rocks, they were quite willing to attack the well-served repast provided for them now.

In exactly half an hour two soldiers came to the door and made deep salaams.

"Very well!" was Nick Carter's response to this silent notification. "Lead on!"

As they filed out of the room, Chick remarked, in a low tone, as he glanced back at the remains of the meal on the table:

"We've got to hand it to the old man for the square meal he puts up. I don't know what we've been eating, but it was as good as anything I ever got in New York."

Jai Singh snorted rather derisively.

"In my part of the country," he boomed, "when we feed guests, we provide fat sheep, which are roasted over a very hot fire, and put before those who eat, with rice, raisins, and many fruits that are gathered for the occasion."

"It looks to me as if these people intend us to be the sheep this time," smiled Nick Carter. "They intend to roast us over a hot fire—if we let them."

"That's right," chuckled Patsy. "If we let them. Gee! There's going to be a hot time in their old town to-day, and we'll be fixing the fire."

Nothing could repress Patsy Garvan's bubbling spirits at the prospect of a battle. He liked fighting for its own sake.

The possibility of his being beaten never occurred to Patsy. That was the reason he was nearly always on the winning side.

The two tall guards, carrying their spears in military fashion, and never looking behind, were several yards in front. Nick Carter turned and addressed all the members of his little band:

"Don't overlook the odds against us. Our four coolies—who could be depended on to keep up their end in a melée when told to drive ahead—are prisoners somewhere in this place. Then Calaman has all our cartridges. We can't do much for ourselves or for Leslie till we get hold of our ammunition."

"We'll get it," declared Patsy, with his usual confidence.

"We've got to do it," added Chick. "We are inside the walls of Shangore, and there is nothing for us but to fight. We got out before, and we can do it again. But, as you say, chief, we must find the cartridges."

When they reached the courtyard of the palace, they

found Calaman waiting for them, surrounded by more than a score of his saturnine guards.

"I am glad to see you have brought your death sticks with you," was the priest's greeting. "We will go to the public square, where you may show me again how the sticks kill at a distance."

They marched through the streets of the city, and the white men were struck by the large numbers of people who were moving about, evidently in holiday dress.

Their garments were all of Eastern style, of course, but there was so many different cloths, cut into such varied designs, that Nick Carter told himself he had never seen a more striking sartorial display even on Fifth Avenue on a bright afternoon.

"You will not kill men for me with your stick, I suppose?" asked the priest, rather wistfully. "I could have three or four of them tied to those stakes over there, and your death sticks could be tried on them."

This cold-blooded suggestion made Patsy grind his teeth.

Nick Carter shook his head, and answered that he certainly could not consent to do murder in that way.

"Well, I felt sure of that," returned the priest. "So I have something else for you. Look!"

Nick Carter shuddered as he gazed at the gruesome object at which Calaman pointed.

Between two stakes driven into the ground was strung a long rope. In the middle of the rope was a cord hanging down a little way, and on the end of it was the shriveled head of a human being.

The head had been embalmed, dried, and treated in the secret way known to the people of this strange country, and was not bigger than a good-sized orange.

There it hung, swaying gently to and fro in the slight breeze, occasionally spinning around, as if it were inspecting everything in the square in its own mysterious, grim way.

"Can you hit that with your death stick?" asked the priest.

"Yes," was Nick's prompt reply.

"Even while it moves a little?"

"Yes."

"Gee! I wouldn't have said that," grumbled Patsy, in a low tone. "You might as well have had it as easy as you could get it."

"Then let my white brothers raise their sticks and do it," directed Calaman, stepping back a little.

"One moment?" called out the detective. "Before we can use our sticks, we must have those little brass cases that you took from us when we were here before."

Two of the heavy boxes containing cartridges which had come into possession of the priest when Nick and his party had been in the city on the previous day were on the ground, and Nick had seen them.

"Break open that box!" ordered Calaman, pointing to the one he meant.

One of the guards, with his spear, pried off the lid. Nick Carter at once took one of the smaller boxes in the outer case and stuffed it into one of his outside pockets.

The small box contained two hundred and fifty cartridges.

"Get some!" he directed his comrades laconically.

Chick, Patsy, Jefferson Arnold, Adil, and Jai Singh all obeyed. Each was soon well supplied with cartridges, while the big box was practically empty.

Calaman regarded them suspiciously as they grabbed the cartridges. But he did not say anything. Doubtless he felt that he had the whole party in his power, and he could afford to let them have all of these little brass things they wanted.

"First trick to us!" mumbled Jefferson. "And my rifle magazine is plumb full, as well. We'll make the old scalawag sit up before we're through with him. Let 'er go, Carter!"

The detective dropped to one knee, and seemingly without taking careful aim, sent three shots at the swinging head.

Crack! crack! crack!

Every bullet had struck the head and was embedded in it. The process of drying and embalming had given it a toughness which permitted the bullets to sink in, without cracking or destroying its shape.

"Holy mackerel!" muttered Patsy Garvan. "That's a sickening thing. But the chief plugged it, all the same."

The detective got up and brushed his knee with his hand.

"Go and see for yourself," he said to the priest. "I have used three of these little cases, and you will find a bit of lead in that skull for each one. Had three of your guards been standing there, I could have killed them as easily as I hit that head."

Calaman, accompanied by two of his guards, walked across the open space to the swinging head—it was rather more than two hundred yards from where Nick Carter had stood to shoot—and examined it closely.

The three bullets were there. The priest could see them plainly. There had been no deception by the white man with the death stick.

"Stay there, Calaman!" called out Nick. "Stand three paces to the right of the head, and watch. The death sticks will do more than you have already seen."

The priest did as he was told, with a wondering expression in his deep-set dark eyes. The detective turned to Chick, and spoke in low, earnest tones:

"Blaze away at it, Chick. And be sure to hit it squarely in the middle, if you can."

"I can do it," replied Chick. "I'll drive my first bullet farther in with two others. How will that do?"

"Capital, if you can manage it. I want to teach that old heathen a lesson that will make him wonder where it is going to stop."

Nick Carter was pumping fresh cartridges into his own magazine as he spoke. There should be no chance of his being caught with an unloaded rifle while he had ammunition within reach, at all events.

"I can manage it," grunted Chick, as he took careful aim. "I'm glad I've always kept up swinging-target practice. At some of those shooting galleries in New York they have me barred out," he added, with a grin.

"Wait a moment!" roared Calaman. "I'll come away while you are using your death sticks. They might go the wrong way."

"There's no danger if you don't move," Nick Carter called back to him. "Tell your guards to keep away." Then, to Chick: "Now, old man, show them what you have."

The guards moved away in a hurry, glad of the excuse to get out of what seemed to them a very dangerous situation. But Calaman stuck to his place. There was no cowardice in the old priest.

Chick was as good as his word.

Calaman involuntarily lifted his hands in astonishment as he saw that there was only one fresh hole, but that it went far into the skull—so nearly through, that some of the sand with which it was tightly stuffed filtered out at the back.

The priest turned toward the white men, just as Nick Carter spoke again, in a loud tone, as a new idea came to him.

"Stand where you are," he requested of Calaman. "I'll show you that the death stick can be made to strike closely without hurting anybody when we ask it to do so."

Calaman stood still, as if he did not quite understand what was meant. Then Nick fired three shots so quickly that they sounded like the roll of a drum—one to the right, one to the left, and another a foot above the head of the priest. All three bullets just shaved him.

As the detective held up a hand and smiled, to indicate that it was all over, Calaman stalked toward him. He was outwardly calm, whatever may have been his thoughts. The old fellow was a past master in hiding his emotions.

"You hold my life in your hands," he said. "I saw that each of those little metal cases meant death, and I heard the whir as they passed by my head. Now, show me how to use them, and perhaps I will let the white man you seek go free. Besides, I may give you all many presents."

"You say 'perhaps' you will let our friend, the white man in your city, go free," rejoined Nick Carter. "Do you forget that you promised he should be delivered to us? Also you said that there was no enmity between us. I am showing you how we use our death sticks. I would not do that for one whom I believed to be an enemy."

Calaman smiled inscrutably, and his dark eyes were almost hidden in their sockets for an instant. He looked the incarnation of cunning and malevolence.

"Show it all to me, and your friend shall go free tonight, in honor of the feast of the Golden Scarab," he promised smoothly.

"Very well," replied Nick Carter. But he was not blinded in the least by the priest's sudden acquiescence.

"He doesn't mean to do it," whispered Patsy. "He isn't on the level, and I know it."

"Of course he isn't," returned Nick. "But don't talk. We shall win in the end."

"You bet!" breathed Patsy Garvan confidently.

CHAPTER III.

NICK FINDS A NEW FRIEND.

"I should like to try one of the death sticks," declared the priest persuasively. "Could you show me how to do it?"

This was a feeler that the detective knew meant mischief if the priest were able to follow it up. But there was no way of blocking the game just then. So Nick seemed to accept it with perfect good humor.

"This is a white man's weapon," he warned Calaman, as he held up the rifle for inspection. "You may try it. But sometimes it will hurt those who do not understand it."

"I will take the risk," was Calaman's dogged response.

"Very well. Then you place a cartridge in the breech in this way," explained Nick, as he illustrated with Jai Singh's rifle, which he had taken from the tall Hindu's hand.

While showing the priest how the cartridge was put in, Nick had slyly driven the muzzle of the weapon into the sand at his feet, plugging the barrel very badly.

"I see," observed Calaman. "Is that all?"

"Not quite. You place this end of the stick against your shoulder, to hold it firm. Then you press your finger against this bit of steel. When you do that there will be a loud noise, and the bit of lead, like those you saw in that dried head, will fly out and strike anything that may be in the way."

Calaman listened intently. Then he took the rifle in his hands with the joy of a child in handling a new toy.

Under Nick Carter's guidance, he placed the butt against his shoulder, and pulled the trigger.

The detective had said there would be a loud noise.

There was. The plugged rifle came near bursting, and the recoil knocked Calaman backward in a most undignified somersault, with a badly bruised shoulder and half stunned.

"I told you it was a white man's weapon," chuckled the detective, "and dangerous to those who did not understand it. You are not hurt?"

The priest did not reply to the question. He was scowling wickedly, as he got up, with the assistance of two of his guards, and rubbed his shoulder.

Patsy Garvan could not repress his mirth. He let out a loud snort of enjoyment before Chick could stop it, and then had to get behind the others to recover himself.

Calaman appeared not to notice all this disturbance. But there is no doubt that he knew all about it, and privately resolved to punish Mr. Garvan in his own good time.

"You have shown me things, white man," he purred, in his mildest manner as he turned to Nick Carter. "Now I will show you that which none of your race have seen before. Follow me!"

In a low tone he gave instructions to the captain of his guard. At once a number of them formed into column and marched on ahead, while a few remained behind, as bodyguard for the priest.

"Come!" requested Calaman.

As the little party of strangers marched through the streets behind their priestly conductor, Nick Carter noticed that there was some sort of suppressed excitement among the teeming populace.

Angry murmurs arose, and now and again stones and garbage were flung from somewhere.

At first Nick and his companions thought the missiles were intended for them. Soon, however, they saw that they were mistaken.

From a house on their right there suddenly dashed a man, naked to the waist, who was brandishing a short, heavy-bladed sword, and who seemed to be frantic with fury.

With a shriek of rage, he flew at the captain of the guard, and, with one slashing cut, killed the man.

That was not all. He swept right and left with his formidable sword, and down went two more soldiers.

It was over in a second, and the maniacal slayer seemed to be looking around for new victims.

"Good!" ejaculated Jai Singh. "There is a man! Quick as a panther! And how he can strike! He went clean through the skull and halfway through the shoulder before his blade turned."

Jai Singh had become suddenly filled with the blood fury that always lay a little below the surface in him, and he

would have dashed forward with his spear, to fight anybody or anything, if Nick Carter had not held him back.

"Stop!" he commanded in the Hindu's ear, in stern tones. "This is not our business. Keep out! We shall have enough fighting before we are through. I'll tell you when to use your spear."

Jai Singh panted with eagerness to get into the fray.

"But, sahib," he returned, in a hoarse murmur, "if I could stand back to back with that man for a few moments—he with that sword of his, and I with my spear—there would be a fight that you would like to see. We two could cut up the whole guard of the old priest, and do what we liked in Shangore!"

Nick Carter only waved his hand, and gradually Jai Singh subsided.

The strength and agility of the man who had run amuck were amazing. He escaped from the ring of spears that hedged him in, seemingly by a miracle. His sword flashed up and down, finding its mark each time. He might have been invincible.

Numbers told at last, however. As the man's arm tired, a spear was thrust into his chest. He sprang back, with a roar of rage, and flourished his sword valiantly. But it was no use. Another spear was embedded between his shoulder blades from behind, and he dropped—dead.

The body was picked up and flung carelessly aside, the dead and wounded guards were carried into a house near by, and the procession moved on as if there had been no interruption.

Calaman had looked on impassively throughout the whole incident, but Nick Carter could make out indications of cold, black rage working within him. Also he noted the scowls of the populace and a certain fidgeting of some of the soldiers in his vicinity.

One man in particular, whose rather elaborate uniform proclaimed him to be an officer, showed that he was disgusted with the tragedy that had just taken place, and that he blamed others than the wretched victims.

This officer was a fine-looking man, with well-cut, high-bred features, while his black eyes appeared to look through anything upon which they might chance to be fixed.

It was evident that he found it hard to restrain himself while the poor, demented creature was struggling with the guard. Once or twice he fingered his sword hilt. At such times his piercing eyes were fixed upon Calaman, while his black brows met in a menacing frown.

He caught Nick Carter's eye, and at once there was an understanding between the two men.

"Why are such things allowed, my friend?" asked Nick.

"Because that fiend there, Calaman, and his underpriests, rule the land," was the savage reply, in an undertone. "They have the power and the secret of the Golden Scarab. The people cry out and complain. But that is all. They are superstitious, and they have never understood what the Golden Scarab is, or how it controls their destinies."

"Sounds like the worst kind of bunk," muttered Patsy to Chick. "I'd put my foot on this Scarab thing, if I lived here."

"Hush!" returned Chick. "Let's hear what this man has to say."

"The priests rule everything in Bolongu, and particularly in this city of Shangore," went on the officer to Nick Carter. "Meanwhile we, the nobles, and the rightful rulers of the land, have to pretend that we are loyal to these same priests and that we follow their bidding because we like it."

"There is a nobility in Bolongu, then?" asked the detective.

"As old as any in the world," was the proud reply. "Look you! That man who rushed out of the house, with his bare sword, and who has just been prodded to death, was of royal blood, a cousin of Prince Tillo. Yet, because he was suspected of plotting against the priesthood, his wife is condemned to die to-day by the Scarab."

"Die by the Scarab? What does that mean?"

"You will see," was the enigmatical answer. "It will be this afternoon. Be careful, stranger, you walk a dangerous path! You have strange powers, as I have seen with my own eyes. Yet Calaman is cunning and will lay a trap for you. Even now you may be standing within reach of the claws of the Golden Scarab."

"What is the Golden Scarab I have heard so much about?" asked the detective. "Surely a strong man like yourself, with a sword that no doubt you know how to wield, could kill it—that is, if there is such a thing as this Scarab, and it is not some fairy tale for children!"

"Wait till this afternoon. I'll try and have more talk with you then. Calaman is watching us now. When the people are gathered in the amphitheater over there this afternoon, the white man you seek is to be brought out to die the death of the Scarab!"

Horror-stricken as Nick Carter was when he heard this, he was glad the officer had spoken so softly that only he had heard the words. Particularly he was pleased that they had not reached the ears of Jefferson Arnold. If they had, nothing could have prevented the peppery old millionaire flinging himself at once upon Calaman and his guards in an endeavor to save his son.

Such an attack could not but have been unsuccessful just then.

"You say the white man is to die this afternoon?" murmured Nick Carter.

"Yes, but not until some others who are condemned have been disposed of."

"But—this must not be," exclaimed Nick, in the same low tone, but with the fire of determination blazing in his gray eyes. "This young man is the son of one of the most powerful and wealthiest men in the big country from which I come—America. You have heard of it?"

"Of course I have," returned the officer. "Who has not? But if this young white man is to be saved, it must be by your own endeavors. There is one thing more," he added, after a short pause: "If I can help in any way, I will. Perhaps I can. But no more words. Calaman is beckoning."

CHAPTER IV.

HOW CALAMAN KEPT HIS WORD.

"Whom does he want? You?" asked the detective.

"I think not. He seems to be looking at you. Go!"

"One moment!" begged Nick Carter. "Do you know Calaman very well? Is he your friend or an enemy?"

"Outwardly we are on good terms," was the answer. "But who can trust Calaman? He trusts me, I believe, because once I did him a service—it matters not what. But if once he got an inkling of a suspicion, even now, at the

last hour, neither you nor I would see the sun sink below those hills to-night. Now go, before he gets suspicious."

Nick Carter strode over to the priest, apparently unconcerned, but with every sense on the alert.

"Stranger! Accompany me!" came from Calaman. "You shall see to-day something you could never have anticipated."

"I believe that," was Nick Carter's quiet response.

They had reached the steps of the temple. It was a magnificent structure, built with the architectural skill of any American or European pile of its kind. It seemed to be of the finest marble, and the great dome was covered with thin sheets of beaten gold that glistened in the sun as if it were afire.

On the lower steps the guard halted. Calaman, accompanied by all of Nick Carter's party—except Captain, Nick Carter's splendid bloodhound, who had trotted along modestly at their heels throughout all their peregrinations, without trying to force himself into notice, paused.

He gave a sign to the guards, and one of them took Captain by his massive collar.

If Chick had not spoken a few words to the bloodhound on the instant, the soldier never could have retained his grip. But when Chick told the dog to go with him and be quiet, he obeyed with the docility that was one of his predominant characteristics.

Once inside the temple, Nick Carter was struck by the coolness, in contrast with the stifling heat outside.

"Seems like a fine building," remarked Chick.

"Nothing slow about this!" muttered Patsy. "Reminds me of the Pennsylvania Station in New York."

It was a minute or two before their eyes became accustomed to the gloom.

As they began to distinguish their surroundings, Chick observed softly that he understood now what was meant by "dim, religious light."

The party had just time to note that the interior of the temple was quite the equal in beauty and impressiveness to the outside, when the clang of heavy, metal-sheathed doors sounded behind them, the echoes repeating themselves indefinitely.

Then things began to happen quickly.

White-robed priests seemed to rise from the floor on every side of them, and, before they could raise a hand to defend themselves, each member of the party was pounced upon by half a dozen men, who bound their arms behind their back.

It is not to be supposed that the captives submitted without a battle.

Patsy Garvan, uttering defiances thick and fast, lashed out his feet at the bare legs of the priests, and left many a mark on their shins that they carried for weeks and months.

"Just give me one of my hands!" howled Patsy. "That's all I want—one! I'll lick ten of these fellows with the other, and I'll bet on it. Just give me one hand!"

There was no response to this, and soon Patsy was as helpless as a dressed duck.

Nick Carter had been fighting desperately, and for a moment it looked as if he might even get the better of his assailants. He butted one of them under the chin and sent him crashing backward upon the marble floor.

"Come on, Chick! Use your gun!" he shouted.

But there were too many men against the party.

Even as the detective called to his assistant, the loop of a rope was thrown over his head, and catching him around the waist, pinned his arms to his sides, and brought him back with a jerk, panting and furious.

Everybody in the party was a prisoner by this time, and Nick Carter's busy brain was working to devise a way of escape.

That was his way always when in a tight fix. He never wasted time bewailing his fate, but used all his wits in seeking relief.

A chuckling laugh that he recognized as coming from Calaman made him turn his face in that direction.

"Calaman!" he called.

"I am here."

"What does this mean?"

"Part of the ceremony, my dear white stranger," replied the high priest's voice. "That is all."

There was another stifled chuckle, as if Calaman were enjoying the situation too much for mere words.

It had been a trap carefully prepared, and Nick Carter was obliged to admit that it had worked to perfection.

"You will pay for this, Calaman," he said sternly.

"I am willing to pay for anything I want," was the calm reply.

"You promised to show us the city," continued Nick. "And to release the white man you have as prisoner. That was to be the payment for our showing you how the death sticks work."

The high priest did not try to repress a sneering laugh as he stepped in front of Nick Carter.

"I have not said yet that I will not let the white man go," Calaman reminded the detective.

"Why have you worked this outrage on us?" demanded Nick Carter. "Less than half an hour ago I held your life in my hands, as you know. Yet I did you no harm with my death stick."

"I wish you or Chick had put half a dozen bullets into the old rip," observed Jefferson Arnold.

Calaman glanced at the millionaire with a scowl that promised no good to that impetuous gentleman. Then he turned again to Nick Carter, with a cunning smile, as he fingered his long gray beard.

"I know I made some such promise," he purred, smiling. "And, behold, I am keeping my word to the letter. I promised you free entrance to the city—and you are here. I promised to entertain you as my guests, and I sent you food and wine and the choicest tobacco to smoke."

"That's true enough," muttered Jefferson. "He's as cunning as a rat. Oh, wait till I get out of these ropes! If I don't choke him till his eyes pop out——"

"You see," continued the priest steadily, "I've done everything I promised. You asked to see the city, and even now you stand in its most noble building. As to the other white prisoner—the one who was caught as he tried to break through my guards last night—I promised that you should see and have speech with him. So you shall—this afternoon, in the arena of the Golden Scarab, before you all shall die with him."

He laughed malignantly and glanced at the bonds of his prisoners, as if to assure himself they were secure.

"You are not ashamed of such vile treachery?" asked Nick Carter, his eyes flashing in disgust.

"All is fair in diplomacy and war, my stranger friend," was the cool answer. "I know enough of the outside world to be aware that that truth is accepted everywhere. Besides, I have kept faith with you in every particular."

"This looks like it."

"This state of things was brought on by yourselves," snarled Calaman. "You were unwise enough to boast to me that in those metal cases of yours you held the lives of two thousand men. If your words be true—and, frankly, I believe they are—surely I should be foolish to give you your liberty, or to leave you even now with such weapons in your hands."

"You contemptible old fraud!" burst out Nick. "You shall pay for this. We are not dead men yet."

"You will be before sundown."

The priest snapped this at the detective. Then he signed to his guards to seize the rifles and the spear that Jai Singh carried, and which the Hindu never before had allowed out of his hands, even when he had a rifle as well.

There was a desperate fight when they tried to take away the spear.

Jai Singh had a superstitious regard for his favorite weapon, and bound though he was, he gave the guards such a tussle that one of them had a great gash in his arm before he could tear the spear out of its owner's grasp.

"Look around you, my stranger guests," said Calaman, when the struggle was over. "This is the Temple of the Golden Scarab, and those you see in their places on the walls are his victims. He claims a certain number once every year, at the coming of the full moon. Look!"

They saw that the vast circular walls were faced by serried tiers of niches, in each of which was a mummified, headless form, wrapped in beaten gold.

Over each mummy was a horrible shrunken head in a smaller niche.

There were hundreds and hundreds of them, tier upon tier.

"These are only the noble born of the Scarab's victims," explained Calaman. "The common herd are flung into the lake, where the alligators get them. That empty place over there, on the farthest wall, is for the Prince Tillo, whose body was prepared by one of our medicine men in a cave in the hills."

"We saw that," put in Nick Carter, almost before he knew he had spoken. "It was an awful sight."

The priest laughed.

"You are oversensitive, stranger. I was going to say that Prince Tillo was a great man and powerful—too powerful, for his removal caused some discontent among the people. That is partly why I wanted those sticks of yours. If the discontent should rise to a head, it would be difficult to deal with them."

"This does not concern me," broke in Nick Carter. "What are you going to do with us now?"

"Those other empty recesses on the wall are for certain nobles who will die this afternoon, and for you, my stranger guests. It will be an honor to you, and especially to the dark men you have with you. But you do not belong to Bolongu, and the people will be told that you are all noble in your own countries."

He turned away. As he did so, several of the guards led them through a low archway, down a flight of steps, and into a cell beneath the floor of the temple.

They were bolted in, and left in pitch darkness. Moreover, the air was hot and oppressive.

The first silence was broken by Patsy.

"Well, chief, what now?" he asked. "Of course, we have to get out of this somehow."

"Keep quiet, Patsy," admonished Chick. "Be ready to take orders."

"That's what I always am," retorted Patsy. "I'm only asking."

"If we could get our hands free!" muttered Nick Carter, as he struggled with his bonds. "There would be a few less priests of the Golden Scarab in the world the next time any of them came."

"Bully!" broke out Patsy.

"Can't we untie each other's hands?" suggested Jefferson Arnold.

"I'm afraid it can't be done," was Nick's reply. "The knots are too firm, and they are all behind us. No, all we can do is to wait. There is one thing not to be forgotten, and it may be of considerable help to us."

"What's that?" asked Chick.

"We all have our pistols and some cartridges in our pockets. They did not seem to think of them when they took our rifles."

"If I had my spear, I should not want anything else," lamented Jai Singh.

"So we can have one good fight before the end comes," continued Nick. "If I don't drive a few holes into Calaman, it will be because all my cartridges miss fire."

Patsy Garvan chuckled in the darkness. It was seldom that his chief made such threats. It told Patsy that there would be action after a while.

It was about half an hour afterward when the door opened, showing half a dozen men in the vestments of the priesthood.

Some carried lanterns, while others bore dishes of fruit and meat and wine in great flagons.

These they set upon the one rough table that was in the prison. Then two of them loosened a hand each of the prisoners, so that they could help themselves to food and drink, while behind each stood a tall priest, with drawn sword, ready to strike at the first sign of resistance.

The hand of Patsy Garvan stole to his belt, but Nick Carter shook his head, and his young assistant attacked his food like the rest.

CHAPTER V.

THE SCRATCH AT THE DOOR.

"I have my long knife in my sash, where it is hidden," whispered Jai Singh to Nick Carter, who was next to him. "I could stick that fat pig at my side before he knew what I meant to do. Then you and the others could clean out the remainder with your pistols."

"Hush, Jai Singh!" responded Nick guardedly. "They will hear you."

"No. They are too far from us to hear me whisper. Will you let me do it? We can, I am sure."

"It would be of no use," replied Nick, from behind the goblet as he lifted it to his mouth. "Even if we killed off most of those here, there are hundreds of others within hearing. We could never get out of the building."

"It would be a good way to die," insisted Jai Singh.

"We came here to get Sahib Leslie," the detective reminded him.

This had more effect upon the tall Hindu than anything else that had been said. He was loyal to the two Arnolds.

"I do as you say, sahib," he returned resignedly. "But

I wish these priests would go soon. They make the red mist to swim before my eyes."

The meal was soon dispatched. Then, the priests having tied their hands again, went out. The party of prisoners were again in darkness.

There was silence for some minutes. Each was occupied with his own thoughts, except Jai Singh, who, with the philosophy of his race, curled up on the floor and went to sleep.

"What do you think about my boy, Carter?" asked Jefferson Arnold suddenly. "Surely there must be some way to save him?"

"There's got to be," answered Nick briefly.

"They wouldn't be likely to kill him before we get out of this cell, do you think?"

"Not at all probable. They are to have this Festival of the Golden Scarab this afternoon, and, from what I gather, it is a very ceremonious affair, at which all the people of the city will be present. They will have us there to see the executions."

"They'll never execute my boy!" declared Jefferson Arnold.

"I promise you that," said Nick Carter earnestly.

"I know I have a strong objection to being stuck on a shelf in that temple overhead. That seems the worst part of it," remarked Chick.

"I don't agree with you there, Chick. If we are dead, it won't matter much what monkey tricks they play with us afterward. Only I don't intend to let them kill any of us. So there will be no niches in the temple for us to be put in. As for Leslie, we came into this city to rescue him, and we are going to do it."

Nick Carter said this in the resolute tone usual with him when he had made up his mind, and it inspired confidence in all his companions.

Patsy Garvan indulged in a chuckle, and Jefferson Arnold edged up to the detective in the blackness and nudged him with an elbow. It was the next best thing to shaking hands.

"Hush!" whispered Chick suddenly. "What's that?"

"What?" blurted out Patsy.

"Oh, keep quiet," rebuked Chick. "Listen!"

"Something is moving outside the door," whispered Nick Carter.

"I heard it," added Jefferson Arnold.

"So did I," declared Adil, who had not spoken much since he had been in the cell.

They all listened—except Jai Singh, who still snored contentedly.

"Sounds like a cat," murmured Patsy.

There was a faint, but regular, scratching outside the door, but it made too much noise for a cat.

They had visions of some monstrous creature trying to force his way into the cell, and all except Nick Carter shuddered with the terror that comes sometimes to the bravest man in the face of the unknown.

"We'll have to kick if it comes at us," said Patsy. "That's all we can do. If only we had our hands free!"

"Oh, shut up!" growled Chick. "While we are wishing, why not wish we were outside this city, with Leslie Arnold, and everything all right? Keep still till we see what we are going to do."

"Hush!" ordered Nick Carter.

The scratching continued, and then it came to the detective that the sound might mean something good for them, instead of evil.

"You remember that officer who was talking to us?" he whispered.

"Yes," returned Chick, with a note of hope in his voice.

"That's so," added the millionaire.

"He may be trying to get to us."

"That's it, of course," exclaimed Patsy, jumping to a conclusion with his customary haste.

"We don't know yet," went on Nick Carter. "But——"

More scratching, and Nick Carter was sure the noise was made in a regular cadence, as if it were meant for a signal.

"That officer showed that he was friendly," he murmured. "Perhaps he has found out where we are."

"He's a big man in the city," remarked Chick.

"Exactly. And he could go pretty nearly where he likes—in the temple or anywhere else," was Nick Carter's response. "I'll try to find out, if only I can do it, with these confounded ropes around my arms. Keep still, everybody."

With considerable difficulty, Nick contrived to roll himself across the floor to the door. Once there, he got the toe of his shoe against it and scratched three times, with a distinct pause between each scratch.

At once there came three scratches like his own, on the outside.

"Bully!" burst out of Patsy.

"Hush!"

Nick scratched again three times, and now there came a result of his signaling which was even better than he had anticipated.

There were three quick scratches outside, and then the sound of a key grating in the lock.

Nick Carter rolled himself away from the door, to see what was going to happen.

"Look out for treachery, boys!" he whispered.

But there was nothing of that kind this time. In another moment the door swung gently open, and there appeared a small red spot of light in the blackness.

As the red spot moved about, a low voice came to them, the tone of which was unmistakably friendly.

"Do not fear, strangers! Above all, don't make any noise. It is I, Lord Slava, come to help you. I talked to one of you to-day, the man who first showed what could be done with the death stick, when he put pieces of lead into the head swinging to the cord."

"That's you, chief," whispered Chick.

"I am the person you spoke to, Lord Slava," said Nick Carter to their unseen visitor. "You were friendly."

"I am friendly," came the response. "If you will come with me, you may yet escape the sacrifice. The feast does not begin for an hour."

"Gee! I'd like to keep out of it," observed Patsy.

If Chick's hands had been free, he certainly would have given Patsy a nudge that would have taken the breath out of him.

"You are tied, are you not?" asked Slava.

"You bet!" replied Patsy.

The visitor seemed not to understand this American idiom, and Nick Carter followed it with plainer language.

"Our hands are tied behind our backs."

"I thought so."

Lord Slava blew on the little torch he carried, and which made the red spot of fire. It lightened up under his

breath, until there was enough illumination for him to see where the prisoners were.

"We'll soon have these off," he remarked.

With deft, quick strokes, he cut their bonds.

Jai Singh had woke up, and, catching the last few remarks made, he understood that a friend had come to help them. So he rolled over to have the ropes taken off his limbs.

When he was free, the tall Hindu arose and stretched himself with a grunt of satisfaction that was almost as loud as Patsy Garvan's.

When they were all released, and had had a few moments in which to move about, to get their blood again in circulation, Lord Slava gave the word for them to depart.

"Follow me closely," he cautioned. "One false step may arouse the whole of this nest of vermin. But the way I shall take you is not long, and we can soon be out of immediate danger."

"Now I've got my hands to use again, danger is just what I want," mumbled Patsy to himself. "Gee! There's nothing I'd like better than a rough-house right here."

"Keep quiet, Patsy," admonished Nick Carter, whose keen hearing very little ever escaped.

The prisoners followed Lord Slava step by step, paused while he opened another door and closed it carefully after them all, and passed after him down a long, low, damp-smelling tunnel.

They went on till they came to a sharp turn. There they felt the fresh air blowing on their faces, and saw an oval patch of sky in front and above them.

The friendly officer of the guard placed his heel on the torch and stamped out the fire.

"Now we may speak in safety," he told them. "But not loudly, for soon the crowd will begin to assemble."

"Is the festival going to begin again?" asked Patsy.

"Very soon."

"We are not too late to save my son—the white man who is to be sacrificed?" asked Jefferson Arnold eagerly.

"We are not too late," replied Lord Slava quietly.

"They intend to kill him?" came from Chick.

"If they are not stopped."

"They will be stopped," declared Nick Carter grimly. "Thanks to Lord Slava, here, I am sure of it now."

"I believe you can do it," smiled Lord Slava. "But you must use great caution. I'll confess I have helped you at the risk of my life. Calaman has no mercy on those who oppose him. I'm with you in this venture. In return, I ask you to stand by me."

"Till the death!" returned Nick Carter earnestly.

"Here, too," added Chick.

"And you can bet your pile on me," announced Patsy.

"Where do we strike first?" asked Jefferson Arnold.

"I only have my knife," bewailed Jai Singh. "It will have to serve until I can get a spear. But I'll take one from some of those men as soon as I get near to them."

"I have a revolver," modestly spoke Adil, who seldom said anything unless he considered it absolutely necessary.

"What are we to do?" asked Nick Carter. "Make a sudden rush? That would suit me and all my party."

"That's so!" indorsed Patsy. "Good stuff!"

"We must proceed cautiously," answered Lord Slava, "and yet with boldness. We will make an onslaught at the proper moment, which may either result in the death of us all, or rid the land forever of these pestilent priests."

"They seem to have the country by the throat," observed Nick.

"They have. We nobles, as well as the common people, all know that. The time has come for a desperate rebellion."

"We seem to have come to Shangore at an opportune moment," remarked the detective.

"You have. So I promise that if you die, you shall at least die fighting. If you live, and I also, then you may take your toll of the treasures of the temple. Those treasures are enormous, for the Bolongus are a wealthy people."

"That listens good!" commented Patsy.

"We are lucky, I should say," added Chick, delighted at the prospect of a big fight, with prize money as a pleasant incidental.

"Speak on, Lord Slava," requested Nick Carter. "You have done much for us already. For that we owe you thanks—not in words, but in deeds. As for the treasure, we are not thinking of that."

"Speak for yourself, chief?" murmured Patsy, and this time he spoke so low that not even Nick Carter overheard.

"We will help you with this stroke of yours, Lord Slava," declared Nick. "If it gives us a chance to get even with that rascally Calaman, so much the better."

CHAPTER VI.

ARMED FOR THE RUSH.

"It is against Calaman that our stroke will be directed," declared Lord Slava sternly. "He and his followers. I will tell you in brief why we hate him."

"You need not unless you wish it," returned Nick Carter. "We will fight him hard without knowing that. He has injured us enough to give us cause for battle."

Lord Slava took no notice of the detective's words. He seemed to be thinking of other days, and as if he had forgotten where he was or to whom he was talking.

"In years gone by," he went on, "we were a fighting race, ruled over by princes, and we cut out a path for ourselves with our swords and spears. This was the way it was for generations. Then, little by little, the priests gained power, and we of the Golden Scarab fell more and more under their domination, until now no man dares call his life his own."

"I've seen that already," commented Nick.

"The priests have established a custom to make all who have offended them die the death of the Scarab on the occasion of the annual festival. There is no escape. They pick out the most powerful of the nobles—those who have the ear of the people—as well as the common malefactors. Last year Prince Tillo, my uncle, was one of the victims. The only reason I myself have escaped is that I am one of Calaman's officers."

"That's lucky for you"

"Perhaps!" replied Slava, with a shrug. "But now word has gone around that there is to be a great killing. In addition to you strangers and the other white prisoners you have come here to carry away, they have seized my brother and seven others of the chief nobles of the land. They had to capture these last in secret, for Calaman and his creatures fear the nobles."

"Well, but what are we to do about it?" interrupted Nick Carter, rather impatiently. "This killing will not be allowed to go on, will it?"

"Not if it can be prevented."

"Well, it can," interposed Chick, who had been listening indignantly to Lord Slava's narration.

"I have gathered together certain of my followers," explained Slava, "and we are sworn to rescue our friends or die."

"Of course!" snorted Patsy Garvan. "What else? That's the only sporting thing to do."

"We are some three hundred, all told," went on Slava. "The priests outnumber us six to one. But the people, I believe, are on our side, if we can stop the first rush."

"We shall have to stop it," was Nick Carter's remark.

"I believe we can, with your help, stranger. With your strange weapons—your death sticks—we might turn the tide in our favor. We might even slay the Golden Scarab itself. In that case, the whole nation would thank you."

"This Golden Scarab is alive, then?"

"Yes."

"Big?"

"Very."

"Where did it come from?"

"I don't know. Nobody does—except Calaman and those who are very near to him. The creature is seen only once a year at the festival. Where it goes for the rest of the time I cannot tell you."

"Queer!" mused Carter. "It doesn't sound natural, somehow."

"Perhaps it isn't," returned Lord Slava. "However, you will see it this afternoon, and judge for yourself."

"Has anybody ever tried to kill it, or find out what it really is?" asked Nick.

"Often. But always without success. It is useless for us to talk about it. You will admit that when you see the thing," added Lord Slava, shaking his head. "I can count on you and your friends, can I?"

"You most certainly can," answered Nick Carter. "I shall be glad to see this Scarab. And I don't think it is going to set us all at defiance successfully. I have a feeling that we shall get the better of it to-day."

"Its bite is certain death," Lord Slava warned him solemnly.

"So is the bite of my rifle," returned Nick dryly. "If I can get hold of it before I meet this insect, I shall not be afraid of its biting me. If I don't have the rifle, then I will try what can be done with an automatic revolver and a thirty-eight cartridge or two."

"Or a club," put in Chick.

"I've hunted tigers when they've been pretty savage, and I've been in close quarters with them," put in Jefferson Arnold. "They never got away with me yet, and I guess I won't back down before a thing like this Scarab, especially with Nick Carter and the others to back me up."

"Those priests grabbed all our guns and things," grumbled Patsy. "But if I can get hold of one of their spears, blowed if I don't try what I can do with it when I run out of cartridges for my revolver."

Chick smiled at his comrade's persistence. He knew very well that Patsy would do what he said, if there were nothing better.

"You won't have to make shift with Bolongu weapons," said Lord Slava, with a smile. "Look!"

He pointed to a corner of the tunnel in which they stood. There were all their rifles, the opened case of cartridges which had been used when Nick Carter and Chick fired at the mummified head in the public square, and Jai Singh's spear.

The tall Hindu was the first person to make a swoop upon the collection. He had his beloved spear in his hand almost as soon as Lord Slava had turned his finger in that direction, and was flourishing it as joyously as a boy might play with his toy sword.

"Ugh! Good!" ejaculated Jai Singh.

He rubbed his face all over the shining metal head, and passed his fingers affectionately along the long shaft.

He could hardly realize that he had again the weapon that had been such a friend in many a hard-fought scrimmage, as well as often in the jungle, when he had stood off wild beasts that only an exceptionally brave man would dare to face.

Nick Carter slipped cartridges into his rifle until the magazine was full—taking them out of the opened case, rather than from his pocket.

His example was followed by all the others. When the party got on the move again, each member of it had the means of killing a dozen or so of the enemy right in his hands.

"How did these things get here?" asked Nick, when he saw that all his companions were properly equipped.

"I did it," smiled Lord Slava. "Certain of my men had charge of them, so I had them conveyed to this place. Though, I will confess, they seem to me very dangerous to handle. When I had the death sticks where I could put my hands on them, I made my way to the cell where they had put you. I hoped to have your help in the enterprise I have in view."

"I'm glad you thought of us," interrupted Nick Carter earnestly.

"Yes. I came secretly, by this tunnel. It has not been used for very many years. You see, it leads directly from the temple to the great arena itself. It is in that arena that the killings will take place."

"It is a wonder they didn't have the tunnel locked up—if there is any way of doing it," suggested Nick.

"There is, but I got the key of the outer door by drugging one of the priests with wine. After that, there was no difficulty save in finding out which one of the cells they had put you in."

"I couldn't believe we were to stay there without somebody coming to help us," said the detective. "It would be too much bad luck in a small package."

"See!" broke in Slava. "The people are gathering in the arena. The festival will soon begin."

"Queer name to give a wholesale butchery," remarked Chick. "A festival."

"It's only a revival of the big festivals of the ancient Romans, after all, Chick," his chief reminded him.

"That may be. But this is the twentieth century, not the first—or whenever it was they used to kill people in the Colosseum," was Chick's rejoinder. "Baseball is more in my line."

Lord Slava pointed out of the doorway, and the others all stared out, with strange feelings of mingled interest and indignation, as they thought of the attempt that was

to be made on the lives of Leslie Arnold and themselves.

It was a wonderful sight, regarded purely in the light of a spectacle.

They found themselves looking into an immense circular amphitheater of soft sand. It measured some five hundred feet across, and was surrounded on all sides by tier upon tier of stone seats, as symmetrically made as if each had been the work of a finished artist.

Many of these seats already had occupants, although it would be some time before the exhibition would begin. Dimly seen, ghostly forms they were, as they came up from below and slid silently into their chosen places.

There was a high wall at the bottom of the tiers of seats, so that those who would take part in the performances in the arena would not be able to reach the spectators. In a general way, the place looked like a bull-fighting theater.

The lower seats, next to the top of the wall, were handsomely decorated. They were reserved for the nobles and other people of importance. The upper ones, and by far the greater number, were given over to the populace.

Directly opposite the special seats for the nobility was a stone archway, with a gilded, barred gate.

"It is by that gate that the Scarab comes for his victims," explained Slava. "From that other gate, yonder, the victims are driven out, or dragged away, as the case may be."

CHAPTER VII.

THREE IN A ROW.

"Who are to be killed first?" asked Nick Carter, when they had been looking into the amphitheater for some minutes.

"Well," returned Lord Slava, "the first three are malefactors who deserve no better fate. But after that comes the challenge."

"What challenge?" burst out the inquisitive Patsy.

"According to custom, there must be a challenge before any person of high degree may be put to death. The next victim on the list is the wife of that man who ran amuck in the street and whom you saw slain this morning."

"A woman?" exclaimed Chick, in horror.

"Yes. But we are determined to save her if we can. So, after the challenge, in the pause before she is brought in, I will give you the signal," said Lord Slava, addressing Nick Carter.

"But what is the challenge?" asked the detective, still mystified.

"According to the law of Bolongu, any man not condemned may step into the arena, armed with his own weapons, and demand to fight the Scarab."

"And is there always some one to offer this challenge?" broke in Chick.

"There has been none in the last generation," replied Lord Slava. "Even before that the Scarab has never been vanquished. Were some one to step out and beat it, then these executions would have to stop."

"It looks to me as if it would be a swell thing to put a bug in the ear of this other bug—or whatever the Scarab is," observed Patsy. "It *is* some kind of a bug, isn't it?"

"A beetle," answered Slava.

Jai Singh had been busy with his usual occupation when there was nothing else to be done—namely, polishing his spear. He looked up now, with an eager light in his eyes.

"I should like to have a look at that beetle," he remarked. "It sounds like a good fight. I should have my spear and this Golden Scarab could come at me with all his claws. That would be a little in his favor. Still, I believe I should be the victor."

Lord Slava smiled and shook his head.

"You are a brave man, stranger. But you know not what you ask. The Scarab is no ordinary foe. The very touch of one of its claws is instant and awful death."

"My spear is swift, and so am I," returned Jai Singh simply.

He went on with his polishing, as if there was nothing more to be argued, but he listened to all that might be said.

"There's nothing slow about Jai Singh," volunteered Patsy.

"His spear is as powerful and quick as a shot, it has always seemed to me," added Chick.

"At the same time," went on Patsy, "if you can't let Jai Singh take it up, what's the matter with little boy Patsy having some fun with this big lightning bug? I'd make his overcoat rattle, even if I couldn't plug a few holes in it."

"Wouldn't do," was the veto Nick Carter put on this. "I can't afford to lose you yet, Patsy."

Lord Slava evidently admired Patsy Garvan's pluck, but he agreed with Nick Carter that the young assistant would not be the man to offer the challenge on which so much would depend.

"You will await the signal," he directed, turning to Nick. "Do not show yourselves before. As you see, the amphitheater is fast filling up. It is not safe for me to stay here any longer. Your escape must have been discovered by this time."

"Is any one likely to come here after us?" asked Nick. "If there should be an attack on us here, why——"

He held up his rifle significantly. Lord Slava shook his head again.

"There is no danger," he replied. "Here you are secure. No man can reach you in this tunnel. I will see to that. But when you hear the trumpets that will open the festival, then keep well back, where the shadows are deep, and do not speak overloud."

"Who is there to hear us if we do speak?" asked Nick, somewhat puzzled.

"There are seats right over your head. Calaman's throne is immediately above where you are standing. The walls are thick, but it might chance that he would hear you if you raised your voice even for a word or two."

Saying this, Lord Slava gripped the hands of each of the white men, smiled, and vanished by the way they had come.

"Not a bad fellow—for a lord," observed Chick. "But I didn't expect to find such things in an out-of-the-way corner of India like this. You can't lose 'em. They will wear titles, no matter where you go."

"I wonder who gave him his title, anyhow?" mused Patsy. "There doesn't seem to be anybody in this country higher than old Calaman, and I don't think much of him. Gee! Jai Singh!" he went on, addressing the Hindu. "Why don't you give yourself a rest from polishing that

old spear of yours? It's got me all dazzled as it is! It shines like an icicle under an electric light."

"It may lose its shine when I use it up there," answered Jai Singh, with a grim smile, as he nodded toward the opening of the amphitheater. "I polish only when it is not used, Sahib Patsy."

"That's so, too," murmured Patsy to himself. "When there's real action, you don't see him primping either his spear or himself."

The festival in the arena began, and the thousands of spectators who had gathered settled down to enjoy the exhibition.

The first victim was a slouching, hangdog-looking man, who, if his appearance was a criterion of his character, ought never to have been out of jail. He was one of the malefactors who, according to Lord Slava, were to be the first victims of the Golden Scarab.

He was shoved out of one of the gateways, and as he stood, shivering, on the sandy floor of the great arena, with not a look or word of mercy for him anywhere, he whimpered like a beaten hound.

Then he limped farther into the arena, and gazed about, as if to see where the enemy that he knew must be at hand was coming from.

There was a roar from the multitude as the opposite gates were flung open with a clang.

The man in the middle of the arena seemed to wilt, as he hugged himself and stared around for a way of escape.

There was no hope for him.

From the gateway a great, nondescript creature, like a beetle enlarged hundreds of times, and enveloped in a glistening armor of red and black, worked its way out. It moved over to its intended victim with a sideways motion, varied by little darts straight forward.

The man tried to run away, but he was petrified with fear and could only move a few steps.

A howl of excitement arose from one side of the massed spectators, spreading rapidly around the whole of the great amphitheater.

There was no pity in the sound—only interest and that cruel rapture which is heard at a bullfight when the matador is no match for his furious enemy charging upon him.

The first time the Scarab came near the man, he managed to jump to one side and avoid it. But the respite was only for the slightest fraction of a second. With a hurried scuffle, the thing swung around, and its two great horns, looking like the claws of a gigantic lobster, closed on him!

The man dropped into the sand, without even a groan.

Almost before the people in the seats realized what had happened, or had obtained a clear view, the monster had scuttled back to its den, and attendants were dragging the dead body of the man out another way by long chains.

The second victim, who looked a great deal like the first, was disposed of by the Scarab in about the same way as the other, except that it was done in rather less time.

The awful creature had gone back to its retreat, while the body of its victim was taken out, before the spectators had time to take in all the details of the encounter.

The third man proved to be of tougher metal than his two predecessors. Obviously he was a natural-born fighter.

When he was pushed into the arena by the attendants, his shoulders humped and a look of savage determination in his pale eyes, there was a general feeling that he would be more interesting than the other two men who had been disposed of so quickly.

This fellow kept his gaze on the ground for the most part. Soon it was seen why he did this. He was looking for missiles to use against his uncanny foe.

He picked up a pebble here, a lump of rock there, and an odd piece of metal somewhere else.

He huddled them up in his left arm against his body, keeping his right hand free to hurl them when the time should come.

It soon did come. The Golden Scarab came out of its gateway faster than before, making straight for the desperate being it was expected to destroy.

The man sent two big stones, but the Scarab seemed to be incased in such a hard shell that stones would not hurt it. Instead, it rushed forward with greater fury than ever.

It was a curious battle, and to Nick Carter it seemed as if it did not belong to this age at all. The man, in his strange garments—what there were of them—the Golden Scarab, looking like nothing that the detective ever had seen before, and yet so full of life and activity, and then the massed people, yelling in delight at the imminent fate of a fellow being!

Used as Nick was to all kinds of sights that only few men are privileged to see, this one gave him a sinking feel inside that he could not have described, but which indubitably was there.

The Scarab moved with incredible swiftness, and the man was obliged to leap about with the agility of a pantomimic dancer to keep out of its reach.

The insect—or reptile, whichever it might be called—measured a good six feet in length, and was about half as broad. The shell back resembled that of a turtle. But this creature was much more supple. Besides, the plates that composed its shell slipped about with an ease and smoothness never seen in the commoner animal.

It had six legs, with two horns, the length of a tall man's arm. These were furnished at the ends with hooked claws and incisors of a most vicious aspect.

As it darted here and there, its whole body rippled sinuously, while its scaly back glistened and flashed in the rays of the bright morning sun.

Its method of attack was peculiarly its own. Every time it approached its adversary it would raise its horns and the fore part of its body, strike with the speed of a cat, and retreat before it could suffer a reprisal.

Not that it seemed to fear anything the man could do. Several of his stones had struck it, but without any noticeable effect. The stones made no impression on its hard shell.

Four times the man dodged around the great ring, his uncanny foe close behind him. Although he was making a better showing against the Scarab than most persons ever had, it was evidently only a question of how long he could hold out.

At last he tripped over a sharp rock that he had hurled at his enemy only just before. Down he went, and the blood flowed from a gash in his foot where he had struck the edge of the stone.

In a flash the Golden Scarab was upon him. Before he could scramble to his feet, the two great horns were flung wide and came together with a clash. The incisors

drove deeply into his chest. He dropped to the ground, senseless, a stone still clenched between his stiffening fingers.

A great gasp went up from the thousands of spectators, and the hideous Scarab scuttled back to its lair.

Out came several attendants, to drag the remains of the man away, as they had the others, and the people waited for the next item of the ghastly program.

Chick and Patsy were gazing steadily at the proceedings from their sheltered place, and for once the latter had nothing to say. Only Chick, looking pale under the coat of tan he had acquired in the fierce heat of tropical suns, turned to Nick Carter with a husky whisper:

"What do you make of it, chief?"

The detective shook his head frowningly. He was confessedly puzzled, as well as horrified.

"I can't tell you, Chick," he whispered back. "I've seen many strange sights in the course of my life, but this beats them all. I don't think it is mechanism. But it is an ingenious trick of some kind."

"Well, I'd like to know what it means?" confessed Chick.

"So would I," put in Jefferson Arnold, who had been listening to the low-voiced colloquy.

CHAPTER VIII.

THROWING DOWN THE GAUNTLET.

A loud fanfare on a trumpet echoed across the amphitheater, and into the narrow corridor whence Nick Carter and his companions were looking into the arena.

"Fish!" ejaculated Patsy Garvan, with a pitiful attempt at facetiousness.

"Keep quiet, Patsy," reproved Chick. "This is no time to be funny."

"Listen!" whispered Nick Carter sternly.

There was another trumpet blast, and then the voice of Calaman was heard, somewhere above them, proclaiming, in a loud voice, the usual challenge of the Golden Scarab.

"Does any man dare challenge the Golden Scarab of Shangore to mortal combat? A touch of its horns means death. Is there any one bold enough to join issue with this antagonist? If so, he is welcome, and may the fates give victory to the better fighter!"

This was the regulation phrasing of the challenge, as it was sent forth at each succeeding Festival of the Golden Scarab. Calaman rattled it off as mechanically as an auctioneer runs through the merits of a "lot" for which he knows in advance there will be no bids.

There was a pause. Then the voice of Calaman once more rang through the amphitheater.

"The lists are open to all comers," he added.

Not a sound was heard, and then there was a surprise! Jai Singh, with a bound, reached the opening of the tunnel and sprang into the arena, in front of the throne of Calaman.

"Who are you?" demanded the priest.

"I am Jai Singh, of the land below the hills," was the haughty reply. "I am of high caste, and I am prepared to do battle with the Golden Scarab. I care not that the touch of his horns is death. I have death in my spear, and I will send it to the heart of this creature just as sure as we meet in combat."

Calaman, who had turned pale at seeing this man whom he had thought a prisoner appear suddenly in the amphitheater, armed with his pear, and hurling his defiance back in his teeth, frowned and shook his head.

"The challenge is not for you," he blurted out, at last.

"Why not?" demanded Jai Singh.

"Only men of my own race, or those who are white, can be permitted to face the Golden Scarab in honorable combat."

"Listen to the old bluff!" whispered Patsy Garvan to Nick Carter. "'Honorable combat,' he says. Gee!"

"The challenge was to all comers," insisted Jai Singh.

"It did not mean such as you," was Calaman's contemptuous retort.

Jai Singh stood in front of the priest, his spear ready for action, but with an expression of chagrin on his dark face that he could not hide.

He made a last appeal:

"Listen, Calaman: You have seen that you could not keep me in your dungeon, and that should show you I am worthy to fight your Scarab. If I can set you at defiance in your own temple, why should I not be allowed to go further and prove that the things you send out to battle for you are also of no account?"

Jai Singh had purposely made his tone, as well as his words, as insulting as he could. He wanted to stir the priest to unreasoning wrath, believing that that might lead, sooner than anything else, to his being accepted as a foe for the Golden Scarab.

But Calaman was too crafty to be carried into indiscretion by his own anger.

He controlled himself with a strong effort, and waved Jai Singh away, at the same time nodding to some of his attendants.

The priest was really afraid that this tall, supple Hindu, with his spear, might prove victor in a contest with the Golden Scarab, and he dared not take the chance.

Half a dozen soldiers jumped into the arena and cautiously approached Jai Singh.

"Stand back!" he warned them, flourishing his spear. "I am here, standing on my rights, and I will not move." Then, to Calaman: "You have promised that if any champion beats the Scarab, he can claim any reward he wants. Isn't that so?"

"It is the rule," answered Calaman coldly. "But it does not concern you." Then, to his soldiers: "Seize him, guards! I'll see whether strangers of his race can come and beard me on this day of all others—the most sacred one known to Shangore."

This bombastical speech did not impress Jai Singh. He raised his spear with the firm intention of running through the body the first soldier to come within reach, when a well-known voice in his ear thundered:

"Stop, Jai Singh!"

He swung around, to see that Nick Carter had rushed into the arena and was facing Calaman with a half smile on his strong features.

"Your spear, Jai Singh!" ordered the detective, extending his hand.

Wonderingly, the Hindu placed the weapon in Nick Carter's fingers, and looked at him inquiringly.

"Go back to the others," Nick told him, in a low voice that no one else overheard. "Be ready for any attack that may come. Understand?"

Jai Singh made a low salaam, and, without looking

gently in the direction of Calaman, strode across the steel and into the tunnel from which he had emerged.

Calaman had not been able to repress a start when Nick Carter suddenly came into view and looked at him defiantly.

The priest had been so much occupied with Jai Singh that he had not seen whence the detective came. The first intimation he had of Nick's presence was when the intrepid American stood before him, taking Jai Singh's spear from his hand.

It was inexplicable to Calaman that Carter should be free and in the amphitheater so soon after he was known to be a bound captive in one of the dark dungeons of the temple.

The escape had been discovered some time before, and two priests had been trying in vain to trace the fugitives. Now here was this white man, quite at his ease, and without any bonds on him, prepared to demand speech with the most powerful man in Shangore, the great priest, Calaman!

"I have heard the challenge," called out Nick Carter, in a clear voice, when the hubbub that had arisen on his advent had died down. "I, Nicholas Carter, American, a white man, accept the challenge, and will show this Golden Scarab that he can no longer claim to be the invincible fighter of Shangore! Bring forth your Golden Scarab, Calaman, and let me prove my words on him before you and all the people of this great city."

Calaman swallowed his anger with a tremendous effort, and replied, as if he were not at all taken aback by the appearance of his late prisoner:

"There is nothing to prevent your fighting, if you like. But your chance is so small that I count you already a dead man. What fight you with? The death stick that you have already shown me?"

"No," was the prompt reply. "My death stick might prevail. Probably it would. But I shall meet my foe with this spear, that belongs to my comrade, Jai Singh. Since you would not let him take up the challenge, I appear in his stead, and with his weapon."

Calaman shrugged his shoulders.

"It matters little what you fight with," he sneered. "The end will be your defeat."

"That remains to be seen," was Nick Carter's reply. "But I want it understood here in public that I am to have the reward if I vanquish my enemy in this fight."

"Most certainly," answered Calaman.

"Then I want to go free, with all my friends, including the white man, Leslie Arnold, whom you have kept a prisoner since yesterday," went on Nick, in a ringing voice. "Do you grant that?"

"I grant all that if you defeat the Golden Scarab," answered Calaman.

"Everybody has heard your promise," was Nick's rejoinder. "Now, bring out this monster of yours, and I will see how much my chance of victory is worth."

Nick Carter threw up his spear in salute and strode to the middle of the arena.

A faint cheer arose from the packed seats of the common people. It was not very loud, because there was general awe of Calaman and his associates, but it had burst forth involuntarily.

Here was a man, for the first time in some fifty years, brave enough to accept the challenge of the Golden Scarab.

He was entitled to a cheer, and he got it. But there were few in that vast assemblage who expected to see the valiant American leave the place alive.

The gates clanged, and, amid a deathly silence—as if all those thousands of people were holding their breath in unison—the gigantic beetle came darting out, bristling for the fray.

Nick Carter was an adept in the use of the spear, as he was with all other weapons.

Naturally quick to pick up anything demanding great dexterity, he had soon learned to swing and stab with a spear as skilfully as Jai Singh himself.

He had taken his first lessons years before. But he had done better than that. Since he had been in India this time, he had placed himself under the tutelage of Jai Singh, and had learned all the newer tricks that had been acquired by the great Indian spearman himself.

The detective stood his ground as his hideous foe approached. His spear was ready to leap forward, seeking a vital part at any instant.

The Scarab stopped. It seemed as if it realized that here was an adversary not to be subdued in the ordinary way, and who, therefore, must be treated with respect.

Chick, Patsy, Jefferson Arnold, Adil, and Jai Singh were all watching eagerly from their hidden place of vantage, but none of them spoke. The situation was too tense for conversation.

For nearly half a minute the Golden Scarab and Nick Carter stood still, facing each other. Not a sound could be heard from all the multitude that crowded the seats, tier above tier, around the immense arena.

CHAPTER IX.

THE FATAL THRUST.

"Why didn't he take his rifle?" whispered Patsy to Chick.

"Because a bullet would be of no use against that heavy shell," replied Chick. "The only way to kill that animal would be to aim under it, and that could hardly be done while it is jumping around. You may be sure the chief believes a spear is the most handy tool for what he has to do, or he would not have taken Jai Singh's from him."

"My spear will do it, if anything can," came in a gruff understone from Jai Singh.

Chick had hit on the exact truth. Nick Carter had studied the strength of the glittering shell of the monster during the three previous contests—especially the third one, which was more nearly a fight than either of the others.

He had seen that heavy stones, thrown with great force, had not disturbed the Scarab in the least, even when they struck it fairly and squarely.

The only chance of victory seemed to him to pick out some vulnerable spot under the thick scales, and to do that a weapon which could be handled at short range was essential.

The spear was that weapon. A rifle bullet would not do.

Nick Carter and his awe-inspiring foe were some thirty paces apart, each looking for a chance to rush in.

Suddenly the beetle charged upon its antagonist, its formidable horns raised to deal the death stroke. But Nick Carter had gauged the pace to an inch.

As the great horns, with their poisonous points, opened, to slash him to death, he gave vent to a derisive laugh, leaped clear over the glittering, scaly back of the creature, and coming down firmly on his feet, turned swiftly to strike with his spear.

The Golden Scarab was too quick for him, however. It twisted like lightning, and before he could thrust, was at him again.

This time the claws missed him very narrowly. But Nick escaped by a hand's breath, and dodging to one side, sent in two fierce stabs!

The strokes were ineffective. They came against the scales, and the spear quivered from end to end.

The shock of the blows appeared to have hurt the Scarab a little, however, for it seemed now as if it were trying to escape. One of its hind legs dragged a little, and it was not so active as it had been at first.

"Gee! I believe the chief has got its number!" exclaimed Patsy breathlessly.

Nick Carter was quick to perceive his advantage. Changing his tactics, the pursuer became the pursued.

Around the arena raced the Golden Scarab, with Nick Carter close at its heels, seeking to deliver a blow that would end the battle.

Three times they made the complete circuit of the place, and each time they passed the gateway through which the Scarab had come, it tried to run in.

But Nick was always there with his spear, and prevented the retreat with very little trouble.

The detective found that he could move twice as quickly as the beetle. But he kept in mind the warning of Lord Slava, that one touch of the creature's horns meant death, and was careful never to let them come too close.

The face of Calaman was livid with fury and fear, but the crowds in the seats bellowed encouragement in a great wave of noise that made any words spoken in the amphitheater a mere waste of breath.

It was now that the companions of Nick Carter, unnoticed in the general excitement, stepped out from their hiding place, each—except Jai Singh—with a rifle in his hand.

There was no question that the Golden Scarab felt itself beaten, and sought only to escape the weapon of the agile, watchful man, who seemed to be on all sides at once.

The monster, finding it could not run away, suddenly wheeled on Nick and tried to lunge at him with its poisoned horns. But again the detective easily evaded the attack, and, with a laugh, leaped to safety. At the same time he brought his spear down with a crash on the scaly back.

It was evident to Nick Carter now that he had tired out his foe. At the same time, he began to feel a little fatigued himself.

"I'll have to bring this performance to an end," he muttered. "I believe I've got this thing licked. But Calaman may try some dirty trick on me if I don't watch. So I guess I'll——"

Dodging this way and that, he sought an opening under the scales for a thrust with his spear that would settle the argument once for all.

He did not jab downward, because he had satisfied himself that he could not hope to pierce the scales. Instead, he was delivering half-arm thrusts under the armor. All of them were too short, because he was obliged to keep clear of the deadly horns.

But his chance came at last. The Golden Scarab swerved to one side and seemed to reel slightly. Instantly Nick Carter drove in his spear with all his force, and the whole length of the barbed iron sank out of sight in its body.

The rear end crumpled up, and a hoarse scream came from it at the same instant.

Nick Carter believed he had given it a death wound. But he did not relax his caution on that account.

It was well that he did not, for the fore part of the creature swung around and struck at Nick so viciously that he had only just time to jump clear of the blow.

"Look out, chief!" roared Chick. "He'll get you yet if you don't look out! Mind those horns! Give him another stab! Get him somehow."

"Wow! Let me get into that!" shouted Patsy, running forward, rifle in hand.

"Come back, Patsy!" was Chick's sharp command. "You can't help. You'll only be in the way."

But Patsy had seen something that escaped his fellow assistant, and he kept right on.

"Here's the gun, chief!" he shouted, as he held out his rifle.

"Give it to me!" responded Nick Carter. "That was right, Patsy! Now get back!"

Patsy obeyed, and Nick felt the rifle with the fingers of an expert, to make sure that there was a cartridge ready to be discharged.

As Nick took the rifle, the Scarab made a violent swoop at him with its right tentacle. If the detective hadn't leaped aside, the poisoned point would have gone through his thin linen trouser leg and wounded him to death.

"Not this time, my friend!" observed the American.

He had jumped well back, out of reach of his foe. Dropping to one knee, he leveled the rifle and steadied himself until the fore sight came in line with the writhing, glittering head, and was clear of the people in the seats beyond.

Without hurry or excitement, he pulled the trigger.

In the hush that had fallen over the immense amphitheater, everybody heard the bullet strike.

It had reached a vital spot, for the Golden Scarab rolled over sideways and collapsed.

It was not quite dead, however, for its middle part was moving feebly.

"Wonder if I'd better give it another shot," muttered Nick Carter, as he watched. "Guess not! It's still now. Looks as if I've settled the thing, by George!"

The awed silence which had fallen upon the great concourse was broken by a frenzied scream from Calaman. He was giving a frantic order to somebody to seize the white man who had profaned the great temple of Shangore and killed the Golden Scarab!

But no one took any notice of the powerful priest now. The people were on their feet, most of them cheering the white man who had laid low the beast which had terrorized every one for so many years.

A number of Calaman's guards, unable to shake off the awe they had so long felt for Calaman, and perhaps not desiring to do so, rushed toward Nick Carter.

At the same moment, Chick, Patsy, Jefferson Arnold,

Jai Singh, and Adil ran into the ring from the other side and took their stand by their calm-faced leader.

Calaman's soldiers stopped. They did not know what to do. There was a look in Nick Carter's gray eyes that told them they would have their hands full if they came too near.

"Good for you, Carter!" cried Jefferson Arnold. "By the great horn spoon! I didn't know whether you could do it or not."

"I didn't know myself," admitted Nick. "To tell the truth, it looked like a very ticklish thing all through."

"Hey!" suddenly bellowed Chick. "Look who's here!"

Across the sand came bounding a great dog. He pushed aside two or three of the soldiers, and the next minute had his paws on Nick Carter's shoulders and was licking his face.

It was Captain!

"All right, old man!" exclaimed Nick. "I know you mean well, but keep away from my cheek, will you? Down, Captain!"

The great bloodhound dropped to the sand at once, while the detective patted his head with an affection that Captain understood even better than words.

"Look, chief!" cried Patsy Garvan. "They are setting all the prisoners free!"

CHAPTER X.

WHAT THE GOLDEN SCARAB WAS.

It was just as Nick Carter's friends rushed to his side, to help him in case there should be any hostile demonstration, that Lord Slava, with his men, came swarming into the arena, and gave a loud command.

The soldiers who had been under the dominion of Calaman were merely hirelings, and when they saw that the death of the Golden Scarab appeared to mean the overthrow of the men who had for so long been the rulers, they were eager to flock to the new leader's standard.

So they rushed to the gates which held back the intended victims of the Golden Scarab and flung them wide open.

Out poured a number of prisoners, blinking in the sunlight, and most of them wondering what it was all about.

Suddenly, with a wild shout of delight, and a sobbing, hysterical laugh, Jefferson Arnold dashed across the wide space and flung his arms around a young man who was carrying a woman in his arms.

"Leslie!"

"Dad!"

"Is it you? My boy?"

Jefferson Arnold seemed as if he could not realize that he again had his son back, and he squeezed Leslie without noticing that he held a young woman in his arms.

"Mind the lady, dad!" laughed Leslie. "She's not very strong, and you have a hug like a grizzly bear."

"Put her down, Leslie!" returned the millionaire. "What is the matter with her? Poor thing! She looks dazed."

"No wonder," said Leslie. "She was to have been the next one given to the Golden Scarab. You've managed to save her somehow, but I don't know how."

"Carter did it!" answered Jefferson. "He's killed the thing. Can't you give that poor girl to somebody to take care of, and come over here? You know, my boy," he whispered, in a grave tone, "I don't know whether we are out of this infernal trap yet. I hope we are, but I'm not sure."

Just then Nick Carter came running up, with a rifle in his hand. He gave the weapon to Leslie, together with a handful of cartridges.

"There you are, old man!" he said hurriedly. "Use that if you have to. I have an automatic and a few cartridges in my pocket, so I don't need the rifle. Pass the girl to somebody and come over here."

Leslie Carter beckoned to one of Lord Slava's men, and put the young woman in his charge.

"Take care of her. It's Lord Slava's orders," he said.

This was not the absolute truth, but Leslie felt sure Slava would agree when he was told.

"Ready, Leslie!" asked Nick.

"Quite!"

"Come on, then!"

Jefferson Arnold had a rifle in his hand, and, with his son by his side, felt that he could defy the whole of Shangore. He grinned like a schoolboy as he slapped Leslie on the back and rushed forward to help his friends on the other side of the arena.

Now that they had accomplished the purpose for which they had come, the rescue of Leslie Arnold, Nick Carter and his friends would have been content to go out of the city.

But there was work to be done for the man who had given them their first chance to overcome the Golden Scarab and save Leslie, by releasing them from their dungeon—Lord Slava.

With his soldiers at his back, he met the first rush of Calaman's forces. Nick Carter, Chick, Patsy, and the others were with him, and they sent in a volley at close quarters that did terrible execution.

Jefferson Arnold shot down three of the guards, and Chick accounted for two more. As for Patsy, he did not know how many he got. He just pumped bullets at the enemy with the same cheerful earnestness with which he did everything that came in the line of duty.

Calaman rushed forward with his men, wielding a long knife.

As has been remarked already, the old priest was no coward. He was willing to take all the risks that might be encountered by his men, and he fought like a demon until he was laid low.

It was Lord Slava who killed Calaman with a slash of his sword, after he had parried a venomous cut the priest made at him with his wicked-looking knife.

With the death of Calaman, it seemed as if all the opposition to Slava melted away.

The followers of Calaman fled in all directions. They were chased ruthlessly by the ordinary people whom they had tyrannized over for years, and if there were some excessive cruelties by the indignant populace now that they held the upper hand, it is not a cause for much wonder.

"Say, chief," whispered Patsy to Nick Carter, "have you found out what that big gold bug really is?"

"No, Patsy. I have been too busy helping Lord Slava. His trouble is about over now, however, and I have a little time to look over my late-enemy. Where is it?"

"Still lying over there, where you knocked it," was Patsy's reply. "It's a wonder somebody didn't drag it away, like they did the poor wretches it killed."

Nick Carter, Chick, and Patsy all went over to examine the carcass of the Golden Scarab.

"Just what I thought," muttered Nick, as he knelt by the side of it. "I was pretty certain this was the game?"

"What?" asked Chick.

"I'll show you."

The detective took his heavy jackknife from his pocket, and, without ceremony, ripped open the monster with one long slash.

The Golden Scarab was not a real beetle!

Its form was built of fine steel bands and bamboo, and over it was stretched a network of fine-meshed steel. It was a miracle of skill. The steel network made a foundation for heavy scales like those of a fish, made of pure gold.

Besides this covering, there was a quantity of intricate mechanism, by which the pretended beetle could be moved in any way that might have been possible to a live one.

Inside the case Nick Carter found three dead men. They had been the moving spirits of the thing, and that they had done their work well was proved by the fact that few people doubted the reality of the Golden Scarab.

"I didn't take any stock in it," declared Patsy. "You couldn't tell me a thing like that was alive."

"It was alive in a sense," corrected Chick.

"Well, you know what I mean," grunted Patsy. "How did these men work it, chief?"

"Aren't any of the men alive?" asked Chick.

"No. They have all paid the penalty of their villainy," was Nick Carter's reply. "I cannot say that I am sorry. They would have killed Leslie Arnold if we had not come in time to stop the performance."

"That's so. They got just what they deserved," declared Patsy, with decided vigor.

"And that poor young woman was to have gone first of all," added Chick. "I wonder if she knows that her husband is dead."

"We won't tell her, at all events," said Nick. "Let me look over these fellows in the Scarab, and see what killed them. Two of them were caught by the spear. That's plain enough."

"This other one, in the head of the beast, has a bullet hole in his forehead," announced Chick.

"He was the one who worked the horns and caught the victims in the poisoned knives. What an unmitigated set of ruffians they were. They were under the domination of Calaman, of course. But, if they had not been evilly inclined to begin with, he would have known that they would not serve him in this way."

"Calaman knew his men. You can bet on that," remarked Patsy, with conviction.

Nick Carter did not reply. He was examining the mechanism of the horns.

He found that they were hollow, and that they were jointed, like those of a lobster, to give free play to an inward thrust.

"We'll have to get this fellow out before we can investigate properly," observed Nick. "Lend me a hand, Patsy!"

Between them, they dragged out by the heels the man who had worked the head of the Scarab. His arms had been fitted into the hollow horns, and in each hand was a long, curving, narrow-bladed knife, with a very sharp point.

These knives formed the points of the horns, and were charged with a deadly poison.

The poison was concealed in the handles of the knives, the blades of which were hollow, so that the deadly stuff would run through and empty into a wound made by the weapon.

The knives were gilded to look like part of the Scarab's claws, the whole work being completed with the skill that marked everything done under the guidance of Calaman and his colleagues.

"I always suspected that the Golden Scarab worked in this way," put in the deep voice of Lord Slava behind them. "I never knew till now. Well, this is the end of that kind of thing."

Nick Carter got up and saw that Lord Slava was accompanied by a dozen or so more of men of dignified mien, and he understood that the trouble with Calaman's guards was over.

"Where are all the soldiers that were so bent on killing you and your people a few minutes ago?" asked the detective.

"A few of them are dead," replied Slava, with a shrug. "But most of them have gone to their quarters, to remain there till they are summoned to the palace."

Hardly were the words out of Lord Slava's mouth, when the sound of tramping feet on the sand made them all turn around.

There was a loud shout of angry men, and the next moment the little party around the remains of the Golden Scarab found themselves in the midst of as hot an affray as the average man could possibly desire.

CHAPTER XI.

NICK HANDS BACK A RELIC.

"Beat them back, boys! It's only a bluff!" shouted the voice of Leslie Arnold, from somewhere in the middle of the invaders.

"Look out!" bellowed Jefferson. "They've got my boy again! Carter, I depend on you!"

This was an unnecessary reminder. Nick had seen at a glance what the trouble was all about, and he hurled himself into the thick of the fighting with a vigor that sent half a dozen men reeling from him on either side.

As the detective thus made a way for himself, using only his fists, Leslie Arnold broke away from two gigantic men in the uniform of Calaman's guards.

"Lend me a gun, somebody!" shouted Leslie. "They've grabbed mine away from me! A rifle, or pistol—anything that will shoot!"

But Nick Carter merely caught the young fellow by the hand, and, with a tremendous yank, dragged him away from the men who had been holding him.

The result of the pull was that Leslie came staggering forward, and was caught in the arms of his indignant father.

By this time Nick Carter had drawn his automatic revolver and was pointing it at the head of the foremost of the two men who had held Leslie Arnold.

The fellow knew enough of the power of the mysterious "death stick" to be in dread even of a little one. As he saw the stern face behind the revolver and watched the gently moving finger on the trigger, his mouth opened in terror and he let his long spear fall to the ground.

His companion, faced by a rifle in the hand of Chick,

also let his spear sink into the sand at his feet, while their followers, some twenty strong, seemed ready to give up their weapons at the word of command.

"Stand!" roared Lord Slava, in a voice of thunder. "Who are you?"

The two leaders were wise in their way, and they had gathered enough of the trend of affairs in the last minute to understand that there had been a great change in the government of Shangore—which, in effect, meant all Bolongu.

They were assisted to this conclusion by the spectacle of the dead Calaman, who was being carried away by two men with no more respect than had been shown to the remains of the men killed by the Golden Scarab half an hour before.

"We *were* guards of the high priest Calaman," was the reply of one of the men, with a decided emphasis on the word "were." "We are now whatever my lord desires."

Lord Slava grinned at Nick Carter.

"What do you think of these men?" he asked, in a low tone. "They were seemingly loyal to Calaman. But they are mine now—until somebody takes my power from me. Well, one must use what material comes to his hand. These men are no worse than most others in Shangore. They have been so oppressed for years that one cannot wonder they are truckling and time-serving."

"What were they doing with my friend Leslie Arnold?" asked Nick.

"We had been told by Calaman to take care of him if he escaped the Golden Scarab," said one of the two men. "We did not know that Calaman was dead, and we were obeying orders."

"That's just like Calaman," remarked Lord Slava. "If, by any chance, this young white man, Leslie, had beaten the Golden Scarab, then he was to be put to death in some other way. I'm glad Calaman is dead."

"So am I," roared Jefferson Arnold. "Because it saves me the trouble of killing him. I would have done it right now, if somebody else hadn't done it first."

"Well, gentlemen," said Lord Slava, "I think everything is safe now. By the way, there are four servants of yours, who carried your baggage, waiting in the palace. I had them there, feeling sure that we should be victorious in what we have just now attempted, and I knew you would want your men. I have been appointed provisional governor of Shangore. You will dine with me to-night at the palace, will you not?"

Nick Carter willingly accepted the invitation on behalf of his companions, as well as himself, and then started out for a stroll about Shangore, with only Chick, Patsy, and Captain for company.

"I've always been saddled with old Calaman before when I looked over the city," he remarked. "It will be pleasant to go where we please and see what we please, without that old rascal always on the watch."

The dinner that evening at the palace was well served, and Lord Slava made a noble figure at the head of the table, as the host.

There were fifty people at the great board, most of them of noble blood and resembling in a general way Lord Slava himself.

Nick Carter had the place of honor on the right of the host, with Chick on his left. Close by were the two Arnolds and Patsy Garvan. The white men declared afterward that they never had sat at a pleasanter dinner table.

It was proved that the educated inhabitants of Shangore were full of wit and a certain delicate humor that would have done credit to New York, Boston, or Philadelphia, not to leave out Chicago and San Francisco.

"Say, chief," whispered Patsy, after a particularly good story by Lord Slava, "we haven't got anything on these people at our swell public dinners in New York, have we?"

"The after-dinner speaker and story-teller is not peculiar to any age or clime," laughed Nick Carter. "I hope they are taking care of Jai Singh and Adil through all this."

"They are dining with my principal officers in an adjoining hall," voluntered Lord Slava, who had overheard the remark of his guest. "We owe a great deal to Jai Singh. We must not forget that he wanted to take up the challenge of the Golden Scarab. It was only the detestable meanness and pretense of Calaman that prevented his doing the work that fell to you, Mr. Carter."

"I can hardly feel bitter against Calaman for that," laughed Nick. "I had an experience in that arena which was entirely new to me, and I must confess that I enjoy new sensations."

There was more talk and jollity over various things, and then Nick Carter got to his feet, and in a speech that Patsy afterward said was a bully one, thanked Lord Slava for his assistance in rescuing Leslie Arnold, winding up by requesting him to accept the rifle that had killed the head of the Golden Scarab and had helped to bring a better government to Shangore.

The rifle was accepted with thanks, and after the dinner Nick Carter gave Lord Slava a few lessons in handling it.

Early in the morning, three days later, the party of white men, with their four coolies carrying provisions, and with Jai Singh and Adil leading the way, departed for the mountain pass that would be their first stage on the way home.

Lord Slava sent an escort of a hundred men to get them through the pass, after loading the four coolies with presents for their employers.

These presents were mostly in the shape of jewels and golden ornaments, so that they were not very heavy, although the coolies were so loyal to Nick Carter that they would not have complained if they had had to carry much more than they did.

Slava had been chosen permanent governor of Shangore, and there was great rejoicing all through the Bolongu country, as well as in the city.

Before the soldiers who had brought them to the pass went back, Leslie Arnold and his father had a rather lengthy confab apart from the rest of their party.

"I want to send something back to Lord Slava," said Leslie. "If it had not been for him, I shouldn't be here now, in all probability. With Carter and you shut up in that dungeon, what chance would you have had of getting at me before that devilish beetle contrivance poisoned me to death?"

Jefferson Arnold shuddered. He knew too well how near he had come to losing his only son.

"You're right there, Leslie," he assented. "But what can we give to Slava? The man has more gold and silver and precious stones than he wants, as it is. I don't know what we can give him that he would care for."

"He would appreciate the sentiment of gratitude that prompted us, at all events," returned the young man.

"That's all right, Leslie," grunted his father. "But I

should like our sentiment to take a form that would please him outside of that. Wait a minute. We'll ask—— Hello, Carter!"

"What is it?" asked the detective.

"Come over here. We want to ask you something."

Nick Carter strolled over to the two Arnolds and gave them a good-humored nod.

"Go ahead! What's the difficulty?"

In a few words Leslie Arnold explained what they wanted to do, and the quandary they were in as to how to do it."

"We should like to present Lord Slava with something he would like to possess, and at the same time make him understand in some tangible way how grateful we are."

Nick Carter reflected for a few minutes. Suddenly he exclaimed, in a tone of conviction, as he slapped his right fist into the palm of his other hand:

"I believe I have it!"

"What?" asked Jefferson Arnold. "Something that he would like to have, do you mean?"

"That is exactly what I do mean," replied the detective. "Moreover, I have it right here, in my pocket."

"A photograph of yourself?"

"No. Not exactly," smiled Nick Carter. "I don't suppose he'd care for that."

"I don't agree with you there," dissented Leslie. "But what is it you have?"

Nick dived into one of his coat pockets and brought out a round object wrapped in a cloth.

"Here is something that I am sure Lord Slava would like to have. In fact, I consider it belongs to him more than to any one else. I took it to keep as a memento of this trip through India and of the people of the land of the Golden Scarab. But I willingly give it up."

He unrolled the cloth, and held up the shriveled head he had taken from the cavern of the old witch doctor whom they had surprised hanging over a brazier and caldron more than a week before.

Jefferson Arnold and his son both backed away and looked incredulously at Nick Carter—disgustedly, in fact.

"What in thunder would he want such a thing as that for?" roared Jefferson. "I can bear to look at it."

"Perhaps not. But don't forget that this is the head of Prince Tillo, an uncle of Lord Slava's. Different people have different ideas, my dear Arnold," continued Nick Carter impressively. "I believe that if Lord Slava had this mummified head to hang in the temple at Shangore, he would be better pleased than with anything else you could give him. Suppose you ask the captain of his guard over there."

After some persuasion, Jefferson Arnold followed Nick's advice. The eagerness with which the soldier took the grisly relic told them they had hit on the right thing.

"Lord Slava would have given many jewels for this," he said. "May I take it to him?"

"You certainly may," answered Jefferson, trying to hide a grimace of disgust. "With my compliments, and the gratitude of both my son and myself."

* * * * * * * *

It was three months later, when Nick Carter and his two assistants sat in the handsome library in Nick Carter's home in Madison Avenue, New York, that the detective asked Patsy what the little three-cornered plate of gold was that he had seen in his hand the night before.

Patsy grinned.

"It is a relic of our trip into Shangore, in the Himalayas," he replied. "I grabbed it before we left that amphitheater after all the fuss. I found it in the sand."

"Well, but what is it?"

"Only one of the scales from the Golden Scarab. I was going to have it mounted in a frame, to hang up in the library. It was to be a present to you from Chick and myself."

"I shall be very glad to accept it," smiled Nick Carter. "It will help me to realize, when I look at it, that all that adventure in Shangore was not a dream."

THE END.

The next issue of the NICK CARTER STORIES, No. 136, out April 17th, will contain "The Man They Held Back; or, Nick Carter's Other Self." The plot of the story revolves around the machinations of a gang of counterfeiters, whose ramifications reach far and wide. The great detective, however, matches wits with the makers of "the queer," and the methods he pursues in breaking up the gang, and in bringing its members to justice makes a story that you will thoroughly enjoy.

Dared for Los Angeles.

By ROLAND ASHFORD PHILLIPS.

(This interesting story was commenced in No. 134 of NICK CARTER STORIES. Back numbers can always be obtained from your news dealer or the publishers.)

CHAPTER VI.

AN ADDED DISCOVERY.

After supper in the main shack with the others of the constructing force, Nash sought the seclusion of his own little cabin. His trunks had been brought up from San Fernando several days earlier, but until now he had not had time to unpack them. The cabin had but one room, and this he decorated with some photographs, magazine prints, and some articles of a personal interest.

He made an old box into a bookcase, and upon the shelves arrayed his treasured volumes. These were principally books on engineering and travel, although scattered among them might be found a favorite adventure story or two, several bound collections of verse, and a bulky dictionary. To the books of poetry he added the copy belonging to the vagrant he had met that memorable day in Los Angeles.

"A down-and-outer with a batch of Kipling's ballads," he muttered to himself, as he picked the book from his trunk. "That's a contrast for you." He sat down before the improvised bookcase and read through some of the swinging verse. "Better than a tonic," he murmured later, looking at the clock and discovering he had been lost for nearly two hours. "I don't think that vag ever owned this book. Probably found it in the park, or lifted it from a pocket. I wonder if he——".

He stopped so abruptly that an observer might have thought a hand had gripped his throat. A strange, un-

pleasant thrill raced up his spine; his eyes remained glued to the half-blank page he had inadvertently turned.

There, across the white space, in a thin, angular hand, was written: "To Walter Trask, from his Sister Ethel. Christmas, 1911."

For a minute Nash stared at the writing, his thoughts galloping far away—far beyond the miles of mountain ranges, beyond the limitless stretch of prairie, where, for the moment, he lived over again that black hour in the bunk house. Mentally he recalled the shouts, the questioning voices, the sharp crack of a revolver fired in the closed room. Then the mêlée of fists—the still, death-like face of the man on the floor——

Nash drew in a deep breath and passed a quick hand across his eyes. "What a small world it is, after all!" he reflected. This little volume, picked from the pocket of an unfortunate, had belonged to Walter Trask. What strange trick of Destiny had willed it here, in Nash's hands?

He closed the book and placed it among the others. "I wonder," he said aloud, staring ahead of him with unseeing eyes, "how it is all to end? There's a little rhyme somewhere—Kipling's, too—that reads: 'The sins men do, two by two, come back to them one by one.'"

He got into bed that night with a solemn resolution to banish forever the past from his thoughts. The things that had happened were buried, and all the post-mortem examinations ever devised would not help matters.

Here he was to-day, with a shoulder to the wheel, his quota of strength helping, with the thousand others, to push to completion this wonderful aqueduct that the City of Angels might be supplied with cold, crystal-clear water from the realms of eternal snow. The immensity and daring of the project thrilled him; day by day it grew; day by day he gloried in the thought that he was to contribute a mite toward the great achievement.

CHAPTER VII.

GETTING ACQUAINTED.

Nash accepted his new responsibilities in a manner that won him instant favor, not alone from his superiors, but from the men under him—the motley siftings of many races. And in turn Nash interested himself in their welfare. Knowing that as a chain is only as strong as its weakest link, so he knew that a body of men, striving for one end, must work collectively and without friction to reach that goal.

In the beginning, he determined upon a certain amount of work to be completed in a daily shift. He took the men into his confidence—made them feel a part of his responsibility—encouraged them to strike a record and never fall short of it. Nor was it an easy victory, this final whipping into line—with kindness and consideration instead of the usual oaths and doubled fists—of the passive Hindus, the silent, stolid-faced Japs, the crafty, cat-like Mexicans, and the cheerful, singing Italians. But it was accomplished, and in time Nash became known as possessing the best working crew on the length of the aqueduct.

Hooker said to him one day: "Nash, you're doing more work and better work with half the number of men than Macmillan did with a full crew—and in a third the time. There's a hundred-dollar bonus coming to you for last month's construction."

The aqueduct being a municipal undertaking, the city of Los Angeles awarded a bonus each month to the foreman under whose direction more than the average amount of work was done. The thought that his gang had won out over all the others on the whole construction was a feather in Nash's cap, and he felt as proud as though he had won a million. When the money was presented to him, he took it and distributed the sum among the men. Encouraged by this gift, they won for him the bonus during the following two months.

During all this period, devoting every thought to his work, Nash was irritated by Hooker's peculiar manner—his sly questioning, veiled suggestions, and his continual drunken sprees. While no liquor was allowed in any of the camps, the foreman kept his own cabin well stocked, and when a man wanted a drink he knew just where to get it.

Realizing the exposure which would surely come, Nash spoke to the foreman about it, but gained nothing more than a wink and a slap on the back.

"What the devil, Nash!" he would say. "A man's got to have a little recreation. I'm built for so much work and so much play. Nothing like a little redeye to cheer a fellow up. Blamed sorry you won't join in the fun."

"It's against the city regulations," Nash said. "The inspectors will get wise one of these days. Then your head will go in the basket."

But Hooker waved aside all the arguments. "I'm running Camp Forty-seven, Nash, and I'm pretty particular as to who I'm treating. Besides, Sigsbee knows just what is going on—and he looks the other way. Oh, Sigsbee is a live one, he is."

The mention of Sigsbee's name brought a flood of recollections upon Nash. Hitherto he had fought shy of this man—the mysterious person who had signed the letter that gained him his position—not because he was afraid, but because he did not care to muddle up the affair should it come to answering questions.

Hooker took it for granted that Nash knew Sigsbee, and all his conversation was based on this fact. Many a time Nash was puzzled as to the proper answer to give when the subject was brought up, but so far had managed very nicely to thwart any suspicion which the foreman might have entertained. That it could not last forever, Nash knew well enough; but how it was to end, and where, and at what cost, was beyond the horizon.

Being on intimate terms with Hooker, Nash marveled at the system that prevailed in the matter of engaging help. The newcomer stood no chance in the world unless he brought with him a note signed with that magic name of Sigsbee. The common laborers, however, were the one exception to this ironbound rule.

With the foreman, it was: "Sigsbee wants this," and "Sigsbee wouldn't stand for that," and very often "Sigsbee is the live wire on this aqueduct deal." Sometimes he was referred to as "the old man."

One evening, while visiting in Hooker's cabin and checking up some of the work already completed, the foreman handed a newspaper to Nash.

"The old man's getting to be a real sport," he said, laughing. "Look what the Los Angeles *Times* has to say about his dinner party."

Nash read the item:

"A novel and delightful slumming party was given

last night in honor of the eldest daughter of Jim Sigsbee, the well-known politician. The party of thirty were taken through Chinatown and afterward enjoyed a supper in the underground quarters of Sing Foo, the Chinese mayor. To add to the novelty, the guests were taken in automobiles to Long Beach, where the braver members indulged in a midnight swim."

Nash joined in the foreman's laugh. "Society in the West is getting as hard up for novelties as the crowd at Newport," he ventured, returning the paper.

Later, however, as he bid Hooker good night and strolled slowly across to his own shack, he had drawn one conclusion that started him on the right path, at least.

"Sigsbee is a well-known Los Angeles politician," he told himself, quoting the line from the newspaper item. "And his family stands well in society. The question is now: What has he to do with Camp Forty-seven?"

Nash let himself into the shack, and, divesting himself of some of his clothes, sat down beside the window and took in the view of the valley. The brilliant moonlight flooded the land with silver.

"The aqueduct is a municipal affair," he replied, bringing up all the facts in the case. "Sigsbee is a prominent politician. Engages personally all the better class of help on Camp Forty-seven. All the bills are paid from the Los Angeles treasury."

A sudden idea flashed over him, but it seemed so preposterous that he laughed it away.

"I can't afford to worry too much about Sigsbee," he said. "I'll do the best I know how with the job I have, and if it comes to a show-down, I'll confess the truth about the letter."

CHAPTER VIII.

ON THE FIFTEENTH.

For several weeks after this, things ran on smoothly. Nash progressed swiftly with his work, the usual perfect California weather prevailed, and Hooker remained sober.

One day the foreman left for Los Angeles on business, returning the same evening. The moment he caught sight of him, Nash's heart sank. Hooker was so intoxicated that two of the office employees had to carry him from the wagon to his cabin.

"I thought you were going to cut out this sort of thing," Nash said, helping the foreman into the room.

"Well—I jus' couldn't help it," struggled Hooker. "I was—in town all—day. Saw—saw Sigsbee. We—had a glorious—time—so—so pleasant, the old man—is."

"Do you know what day of the month this is?" asked Nash.

"Day of—the month?" repeated Hooker, smiling and shaking his head. "Sure—sure I do! It's—Monday, ain't it?"

"It's the fifteenth, too. You know what that means, don't you?"

"Fifteenth?" Hooker lifted his head, making a futile attempt to hold it steady. "What's—that——"

"This is inspection day, Hooker. You knew it. The city inspector is below, in Forty-six. He'll be here in another hour. You've got to brace up. Understand me? I'll make you some hot coffee, and you take it down black."

"'S'all right," the foreman gulped. "Don't worry. I'm—I'm not drunk. I've fooled 'em before—sure I have." His head fell back upon the pillow, and he mumbled something to himself.

"If they find you in this condition, you know what it'll mean, Hooker."

Nash busied himself right away, leaving the foreman in charge of another man, while he hurried over to the kitchen and got a can of strong, black coffee.

"Get this down, Hooker," he commanded firmly.

The foreman, who apparently had aroused himself to the necessity of immediate action, took a deep draft of the coffee.

"Ah-h!" he breathed finally. "That's good. I'll—be all—right. Jus' let me—sleep for a few minutes."

He fell asleep at once. Meanwhile, Nash joined the supper crowd, ate his meal in silence, and promptly returned to where the foreman was slumbering.

The city inspector put in an appearance at eight o'clock, driving down from Camp Forty-six. Warned of his coming, Nash attempted to arouse Hooker, but failed absolutely. The foreman was dead to the world. Nash was always a quick thinker, but at this particular instant his brain worked at double time.

The inspector always examined the books of the camp, checked off the supplies, the pay roll, and the expense account, taking duplicate copies into Los Angeles. Hooker had always attended to this, being in full charge of the camp. Now, with the foreman in a drunken sleep, there was but one thing to do—and Nash set out to accomplish it.

He admitted the inspector to the large room in front, which served as an office.

"Where's Hooker?" was the first question of the inspector.

"Very sorry, sir, but the foreman isn't at all well," Nash explained. "Has been under the weather all day, and just an hour or so ago we got him asleep. I don't think there will be any necessity of calling him. I can check over the lists with you."

"Not just the usual thing to do," snapped the inspector irritably. "But I guess it's the only way out of the difficulty. Besides, I want to drive on down to Forty-five before midnight—so we may as well begin."

He removed his hat and coat, while Nash brought out the books and the voucher files and the pay roll. These the inspector went over critically and with a speed that suggested years of experience in similar work. When he came to a snag, Nash helped him out. Nash was surprised at his own familiarity with the details of construction, and more than once the inspector turned upon him a sharp, quizzical glance.

Finally, after checking over an endless row of figures, the man said: "What's your position here?"

"I'm subforeman under Mr. Hooker."

"Duties?"

"In charge of the conduit construction."

The inspector reflected a moment. "Wasn't that Macmillan's position?" he asked.

"Until a month or so ago," Nash said. "Hooker dismissed him for incompetency."

"So?" The inspector frowned, and appeared surprised. However, he asked no more questions.

"We'll take the pay rolls now," he said sharply, lapsing back into his former impersonal and businesslike way.

Nash produced the book and began to call off the different gangs, the numbers they went under, and the total wage list each subforeman was responsible for. He reached his own name, called out the four figures down on the sheet—then hesitated.

"What's that again?" asked the inspector.

"Five thousand four hundred and eighty," Nash read slowly, still puzzling over the discovery.

"Five thousand four hundred and eighty—O. K.," repeated the other. Then, pen suspended in air, he said:

"That's your own gang, isn't it? What are you stumbling over the figures for?"

"I—the figures are blotted. I couldn't just make them out," Nash answered.

The inspector grunted, and called for the next set. Another hour, and the inspection was over. The city representative thrust the sheaf of papers into his pocket, and hurriedly donned his coat and hat.

"Wonder how Hooker is by this time?" he asked.

Nash opened a door in the rear and peered into the darkened chamber. The inspector pushed past and walked to the bed.

"Hum-m-m!" he grunted. "He sure sleeps. Guess we won't disturb him. Tell him everything's O. K., will you?"

"Yes, sir," Nash responded, thankful that the worst was over. He followed the man outside to where his team waited, bid him good night, and watched as the light buggy disappeared up the cañon road.

After that Nash returned to the office and went through a certain section of the pay rolls, comparing the added figures with the ones put down in his own book.

At the end of an hour he tiptoed in, saw that Hooker was still sleeping; then, blowing out the lamp, he closed the door and walked slowly over to his own cabin. Sleep, for the remainder of the night, was an impossibility. The Unexpected had landed a heavy blow.

CHAPTER IX.

IN THE MORNING.

The next day Hooker was both sober and repentant. He seemed to remember faintly what had transpired the night previous; and when Nash had finished breakfast, he called him aside.

"How did you make out last night, Nash?" he asked apprehensively. "Did you trip on anything?"

Nash had fully determined to see the foreman the first thing in the morning, and was glad of this opportunity to speak of the matter.

"Just what do you mean by that?"

"Why, wasn't old Boyer, the inspector, here?"

"He was."

"Well, how did you get around the affair? I was dead to the world, wasn't I? What did the old crab say?"

"I explained matters as best I could," Nash answered. "Said you were ill—which wasn't a lie—and told him I'd pitch in and help him on the books."

"What was the report?"

"He said everything was O. K."

The foreman breathed a sigh of relief. "Well, that's something to be thankful for. You're a brick, Nash! You certainly know how to handle some things."

Nash accepted the praise, such as it was, without replying. The only thing that had been troubling him since the inspector's departure leaped to his tongue.

"Do you know how many men are under me, Hooker?" he inquired.

"Why, I suppose so. Don't you? Don't the books show?"

"Yes, the books show—but they don't balance with mine."

The foreman allowed a frown to creep around his lips; his brow wrinkled. "What are you getting at, Nash?"

"I checked off the pay roll to Boyer last night," Nash said. "Your books credit my department with something greater than five thousand dollars. There's a mistake, of course. I allowed it to go at the time, because I wasn't absolutely certain until I compared the totals with my own memoranda."

During their conversation, they had gradually left the big dining hall and had covered perhaps a quarter of a mile in the direction of Nash's operations. This last remark, delivered in such a matter-of-fact tone by Nash, brought Hooker to an abrupt halt.

"Your memoranda?" exclaimed the foreman. "Say, what are you driving at, Nash?"

"I'm trying to convince myself that those figures on the pay roll, which the inspector accepted as O. K., are mistakes—unintentional mistakes."

"Are you serious?" demanded Hooker.

"I certainly am."

"Do you mean to tell me that my books are—are off color?"

"I'd hate to believe it, Hooker," Nash answered.

The foreman appeared to be dumfounded. "What—what sort of a memorandum have you been keeping?" he asked.

"A personal one," said Nash. "I always believed in a system. I want to know what each of my men is accomplishing. I want to know just how much money I am spending for the city of Los Angeles, and what I am giving in return. One thing is absolutely certain: My salary list has never reached half the sum that you have me credited for."

Hooker calmly folded his arms and stared at the speaker. "Nash," he said, "do you remember what I said to you the first day we met?"

"I believe it was something about knowing when to shut my mouth, wasn't it?"

"Exactly. I said I admired you because you seemed to be sensible, because you possessed a valuable asset in your silence. It seems my ideals are shattered."

"Hooker," Nash replied frankly, "I'm a native of Los Angeles. I love that city, and I'm going to protect its interests. I haven't any authority over you, or over your dealings. I can only concern myself with the things——"

"Why didn't you say you were a local man, in the first place?" interrupted the foreman. "I understood you came from New York."

"I did come from there. But I was born and lived twenty-two years in Los Angeles. I've had enough experience in the engineering line to put me wise to a great many tricks, Hooker. This isn't the first time I've bucked up against the same game."

"Game?" retorted Hooker, his face clouding. "What the——"

"Yes, game!" Nash snapped out the word. "And padding the pay roll isn't a very original one, either."

CHAPTER X.

THE MYSTERY DEEPENS.

An interruption at this critical moment put an end to further argument. One of the subforemen, with a roll of blue prints, engaged Hooker's attention, and Nash, aware of the time, and of the fact that considerable work had to be accomplished that day, abruptly turned away, leaving the foreman to brood over the dénouement.

Since the discovery last night, Nash had not allowed the affair to blind him; he had looked at the situation in the fairest possible light. Coming so abruptly, it stunned him at first. He had always imagined Hooker, while quarrelsome and quick-tempered at times, to stand for what was honorable—especially in a business way. Even after a careful comparison of the ledger with his own memorandum, Nash tried to believe that it had been a mistake—a slip of the pen turning the figure 3 into a 5. He even assured himself that once explained, the foreman would rectify the error immediately.

It was only now, after the short conversation with Hooker, that Nash realized the truth. The figures in the ledger, O. K'd by the city inspector, were far from being mistakes; they had been placed there deliberately, and with but one intent: namely, to defraud the city.

These facts were with Nash the rest of the day, but he tried hard not to allow them to interfere with his work. When the screech of the steam shovel sounded at five o'clock, he finished with the task at hand, saw that the regular preparations for the night were made, and then returned to camp, going direct to his shack, without a glimpse of Hooker.

He was a trifle dubious as to the final outcome of the affair, and was glad, an hour or so later, when he saw the foreman coming up the path.

"Hello, Nash!" was the greeting. "How's the work progressing?"

"Couldn't be better," Nash answered, wondering at the other's tone and manner.

Hooker came in and sat down. He rolled himself a cigarette and lighted it before going on.

"Do you know, Nash," he said, "you're the best man I've ever employed on a job—and I've been in the business twenty years." He blew out a cloud of smoke and watched it drift through the open door into the lowering twilight. "I'm anxious to help you along, too," Hooker continued. "I've put you down on the list for a raise in salary."

Nash leaned back in his chair and gazed quietly into the other's partly obscured face.

"Thank you, Hooker. I have tried my best to please you—and the ones higher up. That's why I called your attention to the—certain figures in the ledger."

The foreman turned his face quickly, snatching the cigarette from between his lips.

"Are you still harping on that?" he demanded irritably. "I thought we'd settled it this morning."

"It had only started then," Nash replied. "I told you—or meant to tell you—that as long as I was a subforeman I wouldn't allow any crooked work to go on in my department. I don't know what is going on in the other divisions; I'm not expected to—but I'm responsible for the conduit construction work, and it's got to be on the level."

"You're putting it pretty strong," Hooker returned, realizing now that all pretense had to be thrown aside.

"I hope I do. The stronger the better."

"You'd sacrifice a good job just because your eyes are too confounded sharp, eh?"

"Put it that way if you will," Nash said quietly. "I have no authority over the dozen or more other departments, but the conduit work, bearing my O. K., must be clean and aboveboard."

"See here, Nash," burst out Hooker, "what's got into you? I thought you had sense—I thought you were wise to some things. Sigsbee must have thought so, or he wouldn't have asked me to put you to work. The old man seldom makes a mistake."

The mention of that politician's name sent Nash's mind racing again. It was on the tip of his tongue to confess everything, when a totally new idea swept over him. He was still considering it when the foreman began talking again.

"I like you, Nash," he said. "You're a good worker, and in many ways you've exceeded my expectations. But you lack—er—well, we might call it tact."

Nash smiled. "I think I displayed a little of that quality when I prevented the inspector from learning the truth about you last night, Hooker."

The foreman shrugged. "Of course," he admitted reluctantly. "In all probability, you saved me my job—and I'm grateful. But I hate to see a smart fellow like you lose out because you're so—finical."

"Finical?" Nash delivered the question leaning forward in his chair, the lines of his strong face set grimly, resolutely. Hooker's features were indistinct now in the gloom; only the red end of his cigarette alternately glowed and died away. "You know better than that, Hooker. You're giving your aid to a piece of dirty work—and inwardly I'm sure you're ashamed. I can't help you. I'll leave to-morrow if you say so. I'm on the square, and I want others to be. This game hits me harder because it is aimed against the city of my birth. I was born in Los Angeles, and I'm proud of it. You're cheating every one of its three hundred thousand citizens. They're building this aqueduct, and they expect every man to do his duty."

"Good Lord!" exclaimed Hooker. "You're ringing in sentiment. It always did amuse me the way you natives blow your own horns. What the devil do you suppose the city of Los Angeles cares about you? Take it from me, Nash, sentiment and business don't mix worth a cent."

"Your opinions and mine differ on more than one subject," Nash replied dryly.

Hooker tossed away his cigarette with a show of annoyance.

"You're a mystery to me, Nash," he declared.

Nash lighted the big lamp on the table before he answered:

"I don't know why I should be. Is it because I——"

A broad, trembling beam of white danced through the uncurtained window, interrupting his speech. Both men turned instinctively. Hooker, the nearest to the window, suddenly exclaimed:

"That's an automobile headlight! Now, who do you

suppose would be fool enough to tackle these roads at this time of night?"

A big machine swept into view by this time, and both men left the shack and walked toward it.

The car was of the roadster type, and was occupied by one man, who, instantly he caught sight of Nash and Hooker, lifted a questioning shout:

"Hello! That you, Hooker?"

Hooker stifled an exclamation, and hurried forward, Nash following calmly. The man in the car had stepped out and was talking hurriedly to the foreman. As Nash came up, standing within the white glow of the twin headlights, Hooker turned.

"Guess you two gentlemen are acquainted, aren't you?" he said, smiling.

Nash looked steadily into the stranger's face.

"I don't believe I've had the honor," he answered.

Hooker turned swiftly to the other. "Why, you surely know Nash, don't you?"

"Can't say as I've ever met him before," was the reply.

Hooker fell back as if some one had struck him across the face.

"Do you mean—mean to say," he stammered, "that you two have never met before?"

"I guess that's about the size of it," announced the stranger.

Hooker was speechless. Nash looked from one to the other of the men, waiting patiently—not a little curiously, too—for the introduction that did not come.

Finally, with a shrug of indifference, the stranger turned back to the machine.

"I'm in a big hurry, Hooker," he snapped. "I want to see you right away. Can you spare me a little time?"

"Of course," the foreman replied dully, as if his mind was a dozen miles away from the subject.

Realizing that he was the unwelcome third party, Nash whirled about and went back to his shack. The moment he was out of hearing, the foreman and the stranger left the machine standing in the road and walked across to Hooker's cabin.

"What the devil's all this fuss about?" the newcomer burst out.

"I'll explain in just a second," Hooker answered. "I want to arrange one matter before then."

They stepped into the big room of the cabin. Hooker lighted a lamp and pulled down the curtains. Then, without a word to his visitor, he jerked the receiver from the telephone and called for a certain person.

"Hello!" he snapped presently, in a hard, tense voice. "That you, Martin? This is Hooker. Now, listen to what I'm saying: I want you to come up here immediately. Understand? I want you to keep an eye on Nash, and see that he doesn't try to get away from the camp. I'm holding you directly responsible. You must not let him out of your sight until you hear from me. Get that? And if it comes to a show-down—well, you know what to do. Remember all of that?"

The response must have been satisfactory, because Hooker immediately hung up the receiver and turned a relieved face toward the other occupant of the room.

"Now I'll explain," he said.

CHAPTER XI.

THE CRISIS.

The two men, secure in the big, lamp-lighted room, stared expectantly into one another's eyes. Hooker was trembling, his face white, despite the tan. He attempted to roll a cigarette before beginning, but his fingers refused to obey. The other man appeared to be more annoyed than otherwise.

"Do you insist that you never before saw that man who was with me to-night?" the foreman asked.

"Never."

"Then how did he happen to have a letter, signed by you, asking that I give him a position?"

"A letter from me?" The other man—it was Jim Sigsbee himself—allowed a frown to creep between his eyes.

"Yes, from you," affirmed Hooker. "Of course, I didn't ask questions. I put him to work. He was a clever man. He's now in charge of the conduit construction."

"What is his name?"

"Elliot Nash. At least, that's what he wanted me to call him."

"Well, what's the excitement? You look as if you'd received a ten-year sentence to the pen!"

"Well," returned Hooker, leaning nearer the politician, his face working strangely in the yellow lamplight, "that's just what I want to avoid. That's why I called up Martin a minute ago. I wanted to be on the safe side."

Sigsbee's interest increased.

"Well, come out with the whole story," he said. "I can stand for it. What's wrong?"

"The inspector—Boyer—was here last night. I was—was ill. Couldn't see him as usual. Nash happened around and checked over the books with him."

Sigsbee was breathing faster now.

"Well, well, go on!"

"This Nash is a systematic chap. Kept a memorandum of everything in his department. He's wise to the pay-roll game."

"You shouldn't have allowed him to see——"

"Allowed him?" Hooker interrupted bitterly. "What else was I to do? Didn't he have a letter from you? How was I to know? I thought of course you knew the man, and that he was wise to things. That's why I trusted him in a dozen different ways."

The politician was beginning to share the foreman's uneasiness.

"Did he come to you after he found out about the pay-roll figures?" he asked.

"Yes. He said he thought at first it was a mistake in the bookkeeping. I imagined he was joking. When I found he was serious, I began to get worried."

"Has he threatened?"

"Not exactly. But he intends to resign unless his department is run on the square. Handed me a bunch of stuff about being a native of Los Angeles, and how he dreaded to see its citizens get the little end of the deal."

"Why not let him resign?" Sigsbee said, after a moment's hesitation. "It'll save explaining, and clear our minds a bit——"

Hooker broke in angrily: "Look here, Sigsbee, you're a sensible man. Hasn't it occurred to you that possibly some one suspects our game and has taken this method of getting the goods on us? We don't know how Nash

got that letter, but in all probability it was just a part of a well-laid scheme. It gave him the opportunity of working on the job and getting the proofs firsthand."

"I hadn't looked at it in that light," Sigsbee said, plainly affected by the foreman's statement. "But it sounds reasonable enough. I've been uneasy myself for the past month or so. There's something in the air—that ominous calm before a storm possibly. Somehow, every time I step into the city hall I expect a hand to descend upon my shoulder. The evening papers are hinting about the amount of money being spent. I don't know where it'll all end."

"I know," vehemently declared Hooker. "It'll be a change of clothes and a State boarding house—all without cost to us."

"Things are looking serious, Hooker, but——" Sigsbee remained buried in thought for the time. Finally he resumed: "Are you satisfied that Nash is a city spotter?"

"Doesn't all the evidence point that way?"

Sigsbee had to admit it did. "I'd like to know how he came in possession of my letter," he went on. "If he found it and needed a job, and took that method of obtaining it—we're still safe. But if it was all a cleverly worked-out scheme, such as you seem to believe—well, things look doubtful."

"I don't think the news has gone beyond this camp," Hooker ventured to hint. "There's some consolation in that, eh?"

Sigsbee's eyes came up swiftly. "You mean we might prevent him from——" He broke off.

"Why not? Desperate cases demand desperate measures. It doesn't seem right that one man should deprive us of all our reward. Now, if he was only out of the way——"

"We're in too deep right now," the politician broke in. "What you suggest would only bring the police and the reporters about us."

Hooker laughed mirthlessly. "What did I suggest?"

"Why, you said——" the other began.

"Don't you know, on jobs of this kind, Sigsbee, that a dozen accidents happen every day? Do you know that we'll average a dozen deaths a month right here in this camp? A steam shovel breaks, or some chain slips, or maybe there's a rock slide. If you say the word, I'm sure Martin could arrange everything."

"That would be very well," Sigsbee said, weighing the matter calmly, "if we were positive of two things: That Nash is not a spotter, and that he alone knows of our affairs."

Hooker walked slowly up and down the room, his hands clenched at his sides. Sigsbee, huddled in a chair before the table, watched him narrowly.

"We've had smooth sailing for three years," the foreman said, at length. "And at the best we could only have one more year—possibly eighteen months. I'd like to wash my hands of the whole affair."

"I'm with you there," responded Sigsbee. "I'd like to drop the game—drop it before we're shown up."

"Well, what's to prevent it?" asked Hooker, pausing beside the other's chair. "Why can't we?"

"We're in deep—infernally deep," Sigsbee said gravely. "I'm afraid they'd trace it back. You know, I haven't the best of reputations since that affair in Chinatown. Once let the rumor get out, and have the newspaper fellows nosing around——" He paused and shrugged. "I've a family to consider, too. If Nash should meet with an accident, such as you've suggested, how do we know but there might be a dozen others—friends, possibly, who'd out with the story? If he's a spotter, he's no fool."

"Why not pass a little of the long green before his eyes?" the foreman spoke up swiftly. "Most of us fall for that."

But Sigsbee shook his head. For some time he was steeped in thought, staring across at the opposite wall, his fat white fingers toying with his watch chain.

"Do you suppose this man would visit me in the city?" he asked, at length.

"I suppose so," moodily responded Hooker. "Why?"

"Will you ask him to call to-morrow at my office?"

"If you insist. But I tell you, Sigsbee, it's playing with fire. One little word from him, and the whole town would be up in arms. We've got him safe as it is. Martin won't let him get out of camp. I don't see why we want to——"

"I'll see him at my office to-morrow at two o'clock," Sigsbee interrupted, heedless of the other's protests. "And as for you, Hooker, maybe I'll give you the vacation you wanted."

TO BE CONTINUED.

SOUND SLEEPERS.

Mr. Boyle says that it is one of the amusements of West Africa to show strangers how a Fantee boy can sleep. A friend of his wishing to rouse some servants and send them to close the shutters and lock the doors, said to him:

"I'll show you something which you wouldn't believe on hearsay."

Thereon he grasped a boy by the heels, dragged him a yard or so, turned him over, and roughly lifted him to a sitting posture; the youth sat up, rubbed his eyes, scratched his head, and went to sleep again. To another he did the same, with a like result.

Having thus got the two alongside, fast asleep, he dragged one on top of the other, and left them a moment; they slumbered placidly in that position. He then ran amuck at them, being in slippers, and upset the pair, and ordered them loudly to close the shutters. They both got up, eyes wide open, and apparently conscious; one walked gravely downstairs, the other retired, with all semblance of reason, to the pantry alongside.

The one who went down came up again in two minutes, still with his eyes wide open, and leisurely lay down to sleep again; the other we found fast snoozing in the pantry on a stool. We took them up, and shook them violently; they rubbed themselves, and went to sleep again.

Dragging them into the dining room, without a word, they silently set about their work, fastening shutters and doors.

"Do you think they are awake?" asked my friend. "Tell them to get you something."

I did so. No response. I repeated the order. They quietly went back, their work completed, and dropped asleep upon their mats. Fast stupefied with sleep all the time!

THE NEWS OF ALL NATIONS.

Chickens on Spotted Mule.

L. E. Richard, of Game, Mo., has a spotted mule that is gentle on all occasions. During the cold spell Mr. Richard's dozen chickens have been roosting on Maud's back. They do this, it is supposed, to keep their feet warm. The mule wanders around the premises and doesn't seem to be annoyed because the chickens prefer to use him as a roost, and the chickens appear to enjoy their ride very much.

Stood on His Head in a Barrel.

Major Simon Pratt, a battle-scarred veteran of more bloody fields than any G. A. R. man in Waldo County, Me., who lost part of an ear, two toes, and a thumb, came near ending his eventful life in a most unsoldierly way. Although he is seventy-eight years old and weighs more than 200 pounds, he is able to be of some help around the place.

He reached into a barrel to set a hen that had nested in it, and pitched headfirst. His grandson and a chum, who happened to be near, were not strong enough to get the major out, but they located a block and tackle near by and by making a hitch around the veteran's ankles, succeeded in hoisting him out.

"Me No Clare," Says Sam.

When a gas stove exploded in the kitchen of a Chinese restaurant in Grand Rapids, Mich., a skillet in which a cook was frying four eggs was hurled a distance of fifteen feet across the room, and the handle penetrated a wall. After the excitement had died down it was found that the yolks of the eggs in the skillet were unbroken and the cook, Sam Gee Lee by name, immediately placed the pan on another blaze and finished the order.

When Sam was asked if he wasn't scared when the stove suddenly shot toward the ceiling in countless sections, he is said to have replied:

"Me cookee on big whale slip. Blig glun go bloom—er-r-r-up—bloom! Me no clare. Cookee allee samee. No cookee, no mon. Sabe?"

"Spook" With Claws Disturbs the Town.

The people of Ithan, a suburb of Philadelphia, Pa., have appealed to the Radnor Township police to rid the community of a "queer thing," dressed like a woman, which prowls about lonely roads late at night and chases men.

Men who have been chased describe the "queer thing" as something very spooky. They say it wears black clothes, a thick, black veil, and has clawlike hands.

Jesse Whitman, who alleges that he was chased one Tuesday night, described his experience as follows:

"It was about twelve-five a. m., and I was passing Chandler's springhouse on Willis Road when it stepped out from the shadows and stalked along behind me. When I hurried, it hurried, and when I slowed up, it slowed up. But it kept getting nearer all the time, and in a minute I was scared out of a year's growth.

"The thing came alongside of me and laid one of its hands on my arm. It gave a kind of grunt and my hair stood right up straight. It was then that I started to run, and I kept running for two miles."

Gypsy Queen's Body Lies Long in State.

The queen of the gypsies is dead. Lying in a costly mahogany casket, her body bedecked with jewels and ancient gold coins, it was being viewed by scores of members of the nomadic tribe.

Mrs. Callie Mitchell, wife of Emil Mitchell, as the pair are known in the States, died at Lolita, Ark., and her remains were taken to Meridian, Miss., to be held until all the wandering nomads might come to view the body. Hundreds have arrived so far.

Emil Mitchell, the king of the tribe, came to this country with his queen from Brazil seventeen years ago, and his followers, about eighty, were mostly his relatives. All were Brazilian Indians, and have multiplied numerously since. When the queen died, long-distance telephone messages and telegrams were sent broadcast to all members of the tribe, and now many wagons and caravans are hurrying to the place to see the last of their queen.

A general council will decide the burial place, which will probably be Cleveland, Ohio. No expense is being spared by the king to make the funeral rival anything of its kind ever seen before. A solid mahogany casket contains her body, which is covered with gold coins and jewels. It is hoped to get every member of the tribe there in time to view the body before it is sealed up.

Duck Now Acts as Watchman.

David Adington, of Hilliard, Ky., owns a duck that serves as a watchdog. The duck was hatched with four legs and soon became a curiosity. When strangers were in the Adington neighborhood, they would always visit his place to see the duck. The bird became so sensitive that whenever it heard any one coming it would run and hide, but despite its efforts to escape, it was generally caught.

Then it changed its tactics, and when any one would approach, it would begin quacking as loud as it could. Now, when any one enters the back yard at night, the duck can be heard all over the neighborhood. Adington has refused several nice sums of money for the duck.

A Wonderful Bedspread.

Stitches totaling 178,962,687 were made by Mrs. P. C. Gress, wife of an Atchison, Kan., physician, in the making of a crocheted bedspread, on display in a furniture store here. There are 555 squares in the spread, each requiring 581 stitches. Other stitches necessary amount to 2,162. It took Mrs. Gress a year to make the spread.

Kansas Has New Gas Blower.

What is claimed to be the greatest gas well ever developed in Kansas sprang into record in Augusta. The flow is estimated at from seventy-five to one hundred million cubic feet per day. So great is the well that when

the cap rock of the gas sand was penetrated, the tools were blown out of the well several hundred feet into the air and the derrick was demolished.

The Augusta gas and oil field is being developed rapidly, and to-day it is second to none in Kansas, and there are over seventy good gas wells, besides the oil wells which solve the fuel proposition here.

Horse Plunges Into Store.

Frightened when the cutter became stuck in the street car tracks, a horse driven by Joseph Cone dashed up the sidewalk on the main street, in Marquette, Mich., stopped in front of Stafford's drug store, snorted a couple of times, and plunged through the big plate-glass window in front of the store. Arriving in the store, he gazed about, showed his teeth in what looked like a grin, then slowly backed his way out and returned to the street. The broken window was the only damage resulting from the episode.

Victim of the Bad Luck Jinx.

He has proven one trouble after another for Lawson A. Dubel, of Frederick, Md., who believes the bad-luck jinx has followed him more persistently than any other man in this country. He must undergo an operation for a growth on his eye. Recently a growth was removed from the other eye. His other mishaps since childhood have been: Left hand almost cut off, right arm broken, severely scalded, jaw broken, tramped upon by a horse and three ribs broken, one ear torn off, and a hole pierced in his head, left foot nearly cut off, kicked by a horse and leg broken, pinned beneath a 1,500-pound derrick, and every rib broken and both hips injured.

Boy Kills Panther in Fight.

Milton Coats, a seventeen-year-old boy, is at a Marked Tree, Ark., hospital here with a terribly lacerated body, due to a fight he had with a mammoth panther.

Young Coats was hunting when the animal leaped from a tree and attacked him. He fought it, but the wild beast overpowered him. As it sank its teeth into his body, the boy managed to get out a hunting knife and cut its throat.

Little Child Saves the Home.

When Police Sergeant Duley, of Tacoma, Wash., answered the telephone at the Central Station the other night, a baby voice said: "I's alone. My papa and mamma is gone, and the stove is turned over. I's afraid, and I want you to come out here."

The firemen found the smoke pouring from the doors of the home of Andrew H. Stoltz, which was saved by the presence of mind of his four-year-old boy. How the little fellow knew the police-station number is a mystery, said the mother.

Girl Saves Drowning Man With Her Auto.

A young woman of rare presence of mind, an automobile tire, a rope, and an automobile worked together to save the life of a man who was pulled out of a deep pond just as he was becoming exhausted.

Miss Elsie Ditson, of Paterson, N. J., is the heroine of the story, while William Young, of Jackson's Mills, is the man in the case. Miss Ditson was driving her automobile through Cedar Grove, near Caldwell, N. J., when she passed the pond there and heard the shouts of a man in distress.

She unstrapped an extra tire that she carried along, fastened to it a rope, and then threw the tire to the struggling man in the pond. He seized it and she tried to pull him out, but was unable to do so. Then she tied the rope to the automobile and started it slowly away from the pond. The man, clinging to the rope, was hauled out of the water. Then Miss Ditson took him in her automobile to the home of her uncle, near by. He said that he had been skating when the ice broke and threw him into the water. His efforts to escape were vain, and he was becoming numb from the cold when his rescuer appeared.

His Life Saved by Rubbers.

Because the sloppy condition of the city's streets caused him to put on a heavy pair of rubbers, David Taxin, of Monroe, Mich., is still living. When he drove over some telephone wires lying on the street and which were crossed by high-tension wires of the municipal electric plant, his team of horses dropped dead. Tazin, thinking they had slipped, got out of the rig and worked over them. Passers-by warned him he was standing on wires carrying 2,300 volts.

Finds Silver Dollar of 1796.

Elmer Steele, of Lewes, Del., found a United States silver dollar bearing the date 1796, while digging in sand near the Cape Henlopen lighthouse. The coin is in excellent condition.

Bird Flies Over the Ocean.

A carrier pigeon dropped from the room of a building in Wilkes-Barre, Pa., and Fred Jacobs, who found it, discovered a message tied about the bird's neck, which evidently was the message of a German soldier in the Belgium trenches to his wife. The message read as follows:

"DEAR WIFE: I am alive and well in the trenches in Belgium, but your brother has been killed."

That was all there was, not even a signature to denote the identity of the man who wrote this little tragedy of war. The pigeon showed evidence of long flight, and the injury to the wing seemed to have been received shortly before the bird was picked up.

The message was written in English and wrapped in the heading of a German newspaper, and the date mark of the paper was Saxony, Dec. ——, the day of the month missing.

Interesting New Inventions.

A new iron-pipe fence post anchors itself as it is driven into the ground, as the lower end is divided into four sections that separate.

In a costly watch that has been made for exhibition purposes there is a wheel that makes a complete revolution only once in four years, operating a dial that shows the years, months, and days.

Three different tones can be produced in a new automobile horn by moving the bulb that supplies it with air to as many angles.

A valve is fitted to the bottom of a new cooking kettle so that water may be drained from vegetables without endangering its user.

A Texas inventor's hair-drying brush that is heated

by electricity is provided with a screen to prevent it burning the scalp.

The frame of a new bicycle is made long enough for a package carrier to be mounted behind the handle bars.

The latest in the line of collapsible baby carriages folds into a box resembling a suit case, for carrying.

A combination of mirror, comb, and identification card to be carried in a person's hat has been patented.

Scooping 'Em Up by Bushels.

Edward Ell and John Eifert, of Sayville, L. I., gather clams for a living. In former days they followed the prosaic method of standing barefoot in the mud and digging with a spade. But the manner in which they supply Manhattan restaurants with these popular shellfish at present is little short of poetry.

They back their small power boats close to the banks in which the clams dwell. Then they start the propellers and let them do the dirty work. Every once in a while they have to reach over and dump a bushel or so of clams into their boat—but that is unavoidable labor.

Meantime, they lie on cushions and smoke and read. For perfection only one thing is lacking—a phonograph to play "This Is the Life," and business is getting so good that they threaten to buy one.

The two fishermen swore before three justices of the peace and seventeen witnesses that the above story is true.

Oldest Person in the World.

Mrs. Mary Brock, aged 135 years, lives in Shades Valley, and her grandson, Sam Foley, of Pratt City, Ala., intends to give her a party in May. That Mrs. Brock is the oldest person in the United States is generally believed, and possibly the oldest in the world.

Mrs. Brock, according to a statement of Mr. Foley, was born August 2, 1780, and has lived in Shades Valley a great many years. Mr. Foley plans to have a birthday celebration at his home in May, and intends to have Mrs. Brock present. Mrs. Brock retains her faculties fairly well. Mr. Foley says:

"Although I have not seen my grandmother in a good many years, at the same time I hear from her occasionally. She is in good health and apparently enjoys life in every way. She has spent the major portion of her life in Shades Valley."

United States Navy Gunner Sets World's Record.

William Ruf, a gun pointer on the United States battleship *Texas*, who is visiting his home in Beacon, N. Y., on a furlough, has been notified that he set a new world's record in marksmanship with the big guns during the recent practice off the Virginia capes. Ruf made eight straight hits with a fourteen-inch gun, shooting at a moving target twelve miles away.

Gathers Gold Nuggets in Streets of Town.

Mrs. Guy Talbott, of Grass Valley, Cal., made fifteen dollars in one day following a heavy storm by mining in the streets of Grass Valley. While her husband was working in a quartz mill for two dollars a day, Mrs. Talbott was picking up nuggets in the street in front of her home. Other women, many men, and almost all the children of Grass Valley are now searching the streets for gold.

The streets of Grass Valley were repaired recently, and "tailings" or refuse ore from a quartz mine were used in lieu of cobbles. After an unusually heavy rain, Mrs. Talbott chanced to see a bit of gold lying exposed in the street. She abandoned housework for the day and picked up fifteen dollars' worth.

Mrs. Talbott tried to keep the secret, but as she could not mine the streets after dark, it was not long until half the town was out looking for gold, and finding some, too.

Grass Valley is not the only city in California paved with gold. From the records of the city of Marysville it is shown that on August 12, 1851, Mayor S. M. Miles issued a proclamation against "the practice of doing mining on the main street of Marysville."

Harder Than the Diamond.

Although the diamond is generally regarded as the hardest of all substances, tantalum, a rare metal, although not one of the rarest, is harder. A thin sheet of it was once placed under a diamond drill worked day and night for three days. The only effect was a slight indentation in the tantalum and the wearing out of the diamond.

Bread-line "Regular" Never Ate Real Meal.

He has been a "regular" in the bread line at the Immanuel Baptist Church, of Chicago, Ill., all winter; his clothes were tattered and threadbare, and his face showed the pinch of hunger. The big Sunday-school room of this Chicago church was crowded to its limits with others in similar condition awaiting their turn at the tables, where bread, butter, and coffee are served every morning from six to eight-thirty o'clock.

Doctor Johnston Myers, pastor of the church, and under whose direction the "line" gets its daily breakfast, called the man to the front of the room after he had swallowed his half a loaf and his two cups of coffee.

"I'm an orphan and I've never eaten a meal with a family," he said, in response to questions by Doctor Myers. "I don't know who my parents were, but I was put in a New York orphanage when a baby. There I stayed until I was twelve years old, when I was sent to a farmer in Canada, to be held until I was of age. That farmer thought of nothing but how much work he could get out of me. When my time was up I started to tramp, and I've been at it ever since.

"I've eaten at back doors, free-lunch counters, and even occasionally at a lunch counter in a restaurant, but I've never sat to a table with a family."

Want Belgian Linen Makers.

The movement to bring expert linen makers from Belgium to western Canada, which raises an exceedingly good grade of flax, is gaining big momentum, and a Belgian priest is now on his way to Europe after conferring with the Canadian Northern Railway. The making of linen had been a large and important industry in Belgium before the war, but now every factory is closed.

A great many women, as well as men, were employed in the industry, and the Belgian priest intends to get in touch with the large manufacturers to induce them to move their plants and bring as many of their old workmen as they can to western Canada.

Two points on the Canadian Northern have been under consideration, both in Saskatchewan and both located in

the heart of the finest flax country in the Dominion. There now is a mill at Rosetown, Sask., which is in the heart of the Gravelburg district, well known for the quality and yield of flax.

Drives Prison Bus Forty Years.

Old Jim Cassidy, of New York, who drove the Black Maria laden with prisoners from the Tombs to police headquarters for years, had his first collapse a day or two ago. The driver of a patrol wagon did not move away quickly enough to suit Deputy Sheriff Levy, who shouted to him. This drew retorts, and old Jim was drawn into the argument. Soon afterward he keeled over.

Doctor Cox, from St. Vincent's Hospital, treated the old man for syncope, and when he revived, he wanted to get back on the Black Maria, and drive his prisoners, but his friends forced him into a cab and took him to his home.

Except for two years of Sheriff Tamsen's term, Cassidy has driven the prison van for nearly forty years. Long before that he was famous the country over as "Jim Cass," a wonderful handler of game chickens and game dogs.

Was Not a Very Busy Justice.

F. P. Reiter has just rounded out twenty-five years as a justice of the peace of West Rockhill Township, Bucks County, Pa.

Preparing the chronology of his career as chief dispenser of justice in the township, the squire learned that he had issued four warrants and had never sent a case, either civil or criminal, to court in the quarter century.

Death of an Aged Virginian.

George Little Collier, a well-known and highly respected citizen of Wise County, Va., has passed away and been laid to rest in the old burying ground at the head of Powell's Valley, by the side of his two wives.

Mr. Collier was eighty-seven years old. He reared twenty-two children, and at his death had forty-eight grandchildren and twenty-two great-grandchildren.

"Uncle Lite," as he was familiarly known, moved to Wise County sixty-three years ago, and previous to that he lived in Lee County. Thus he spent his entire life in the State of Virginia. When he settled in his log cabin, at the foot of Powell's Mountain, bear and deer were plentiful. Norton at that time was a solid growth of laurel and ivy, and he could have purchased "Prince's Flats," now Norton, for one dollar per acre.

Old citizens and travelers will recall the log house at the foot of Stone Mountain, and the first in sight after a long journey from Wise Courthouse through the dense thicket over Prince's flats and across the little, dark, winding, rough, and rocky road through Little Stone Gap.

International Marriages Breed War, She Says.

The ranks of the newly formed Women's Peace Party were thrown into confusion recently when Lady Briggs, widow of Sir John Henry Briggs, proposed an international law prohibiting international marriages.

"Such a law," said Lady Briggs, "would prevent international complications, and thereby prevent war."

Lady Briggs also suggested that the Women's Peace Party undertake to bar naturalization of aliens; to revise American histories which she declared contain untrue accounts of the wars with England, and finally to expurge "sanguinary" lines in the National anthem, declaring the English were therein referred to as a band of hirelings and slaves, whose "blood has washed out their foul footsteps' pollution."

Mrs. Amos Pinchot, president of the New York branch, soothed Lady Briggs with the statement that few persons really knew to whom the lines referred, and those who did took them with a grain of salt.

Woman Devours Twenty-two Lobsters in Contest.

A contest in lobster eating, held recently in the Mecca Café, at No. 3550 Broadway, New York City, was won by Mrs. Eleanor Reynolds, of No. 540 West One Hundred and Sixty-second Street.

Mrs. Reynolds ate twenty-two lobsters and three loaves of bread. Morton Ohrback, her rival, ate seventeen lobsters.

War Spares United States' Mails.

Not one bag of United States mail has been lost through the activities of the war fleets of the European belligerents. In fact, post-office-department officials said to-day no American mail had gone down with a merchantmen destroyed by a warship within the last hundred years.

Postmaster General Burleson expects no interference with the mail service to result from Germany's sea warzone proclamation. It was pointed out that the mail steamers are fast vessels, carrying passengers and but little cargo of the kind belligerents would seek to destroy.

Goes 25,000 Miles to Satisfy Law.

To inspect a little post office on the far-away island of Guam, which pays its postmaster $125 a year, is the object of a 25,000-mile journey which Postal Inspector E. P. Smith is making to satisfy the demands of the law. The inspection of the office will be the first since 1908.

Vincent Astor Orders 2,100 Apple Trees.

Vincent Astor will soon be the most extensive apple grower in the State of New York. It became known yesterday that he has placed an order for 2,100 trees, which will be planted on his large estate, Ferncliffe, at Rhinebeck.

The order was placed with the Harrison Nursery, of Berlin, Md.

Makes Smokeless Coal.

Alfred Muller, a chemist, of St. Louis, Mo., has announced he has discovered a process which makes coal absolutely smokeless, gives more heat, and is consequently cheaper. He has been making the fuel by hand, and is using it in his home.

Picks Indian's Daughter for Bride.

Charles Meyer, aged sixty-five, of Valley Stream, N. Y., who advertised for a wife recently, has picked Mrs. Annie Wilson, daughter of Big Cloud, chief of the Seneca Indians.

A Boy Scout Honored.

The highest honor a boy scout can win has been conferred on Wayne Carney, fifteen years old, of Indianapolis. He has been given a scout honor medal for saving the life of a playmate, Harry Warbington, thirteen years old.

The Warbington lad fell into a creek and was sinking

when his chum went to his rescue. Wayne is a manly little chap. Asked if he was a pretty good swimmer, he said he wasn't. "But you went after this boy when he was drowning?" he was reminded. "Sure," said Wayne. "Anybody would have done that."

Discipline Saves British from Loss.

If discipline were not now being maintained in the British army, it would lose, according to P. M. Neilson, now at the front in France with the First Lowland Company of Engineers. In a letter received recently by his sister, Miss Bessie R. Neilson, of Wilkinsburg, Pa., he tells of several striking instances to show this.

"The Germans made an attack in the night," he says, "on the —— Regiment, which took panic, and nearly all, except two, of their officers fled. Our twenty, however, under Mr. Clark—one of the officers—who had retreated a little, came back to a charge. The other two officers were killed, but our good old Lowland regained the trenches after very hot work.

"One of the men left to tell the tale of Ypres says he and a few others saw the Prussians going around the British wounded, bayoneting them. They could not stand that, so they charged the Germans, who had three times as many men. The Germans, as usual, fell back into their trenches, but the Scotch and English boys pursued them, and then, of all the cheek in the world! the Germans threw down their arms and pleaded for mercy. Our fellows simply shot them all down. Their blood was up.

"Night before last a bullet passed through a box on which I was leaning, but I have had few exciting times myself. Two men of a regiment who tried to desert were killed on the twelfth, after a court-martial, and if discipline were not now maintained, we would lose.

"It's a terrible thing, but I'm afraid it will last a long time. You have no idea what it is like. Our company, which gets home each night, is luckier than the infantry. They are in the trenches for days, even weeks, and some of them don't know what they are doing. Being there so long makes them mad. There is no doubt about that. If you want to speak to them, they just stare at you. They don't understand.

"If, at many points, a man is wounded and falls down, he has to lie there and die in the mud. Should the medical transport come in time, he will be attended to, but they can only remove the wounded at night, on account of the enemy. So that if a man gets wounded at daylight he has to stay where he is until night.

"Some of our dear old Scotch regiments have been wiped out. The Black Watch and Camerons have about ninety-four and one hundred and fifty-eight, respectively, of above one thousand each. They have been out since the beginning of the war, and it was at Ypres they suffered so terribly."

Although, because of the censor, Mr. Neilson is unable to tell just where he is, he says the villages have not a single inhabitant. He describes the beautiful houses, filled with furniture, now occupied by troops. The people, he adds, will never return.

"People will tell you the Germans can't shoot," he says. "Well, they have not seen them. They also say one Briton equals three Germans. There is no difference, and because of their being taught from infancy regarding militarism, the German is the better of the two. And by Britons I mean all the Allies.

"The guns here are booming all day, and an occasional 'Jack Johnson' drops around our billet, which is a mile or so from the actual firing line."

Mr. Neilson continues that the British are bringing to the front only their best men, and says the troops are now supplied with fur jackets and warmers, but remarks that because of the heavy boots many leave them near the trenches, as they can hardly carry themselves, not to speak of ammunition. Even rifles, too, are thrown down.

Under date of Sunday, the twenty-fourth, he adds a brief postscript:

"The French people here won't allow any one to sing. They say it is a time of weeping. All France is the same, and everybody, or very nearly so, is dressed in black. So you see I have not heard any singing since coming to France. Imagine my surprise when just now—this is what made me write this extra bit—there burst forth the 100th Psalm. On looking out, I see it is the Black Watch. Fancy hearing it here! It tones you up a bit. They are at church parade, and really that is the best music I have ever heard in all my life, and they are not good singers."

Why Common Powder Smokes.

Ordinary powder produces smoke when fired because of the quantity of fine particles formed from the breaking up of the saltpeter and from some of the charcoal which is not completely burned.

To get rid of smoke, so long a handicap in the use of guns, it was necessary to produce a substance that would explode without leaving any solid residue. This was accomplished by the use of guncotton or nitrocellulose, from which the most satisfactory smokeless powder is made.

The substance is a chemical compound, not a mixture like gunpowder, and is made by treating cotton with a mixture of nitric and sulphuric acids. When exploded, it is all converted into gases. Burning is not necessary to cause an explosion, a mere shock or jar being sufficient.

It is too violent an explosive to use in small arms or in cannon, but guncotton can be made into less forceful forms, suitable for use in guns, and most brands of smokeless powder are made in this way.

Bloody Arm His Signal Flag.

Vernon Wilson, a farm hand, was injured while in the country, near Glenwood, Iowa, in a peculiar way, and, to get a surgeon, flagged a fast passenger train with his bloody arm and hand and came to Glenwood.

Wilson was hurt when he dropped some cartridges from his hand, one falling on a piece of ice and being discharged. The ball passed through his arm, inflicting a bad wound.

Two Killed in Rail Crash.

James Maxwell, a locomotive engineer of Des Moines, Iowa, and his fireman, H. L. Hickok, of the same place, were killed, and Mail Clerk F. M. Perry, of Waterloo, Iowa, seriously injured in a wreck on the Chicago Great Western Railroad, three miles north of here. Spreading rails are believed to have been the cause. All passengers escaped injury.

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